

Henry Wellwood Moncreiff

Communications on the case
of Professor Robertson Smith,
in the General Assembly of the
Free Church of Scotland,
held at Glasgow in 1878.

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COMMUNICATIONS

ON THE CASE OF

PROFESSOR ROBERTSON SMITH,

IN THE

General Assembly of the Free Church of Scotland,

HELD AT GLASGOW IN 1878.

BY

REV. SIR HENRY WELLWOOD MONCREIFF

AND OTHERS,

(Reprinted from the London "Weekly Review," of July and August, 1878);

ALSO,

AN ADDITIONAL COMMUNICATION,

BY SIR HENRY MONCREIFF,

(Reprinted from the "Weekly Review," of January, 1879);

WITH A

PREFACE BY THE REV. WALTER WOOD, M.A.,

MINISTER AT ELIE, FIFE.

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P R E F A C E.

IT has been thought desirable to publish in a more accessible form the following Communications which have appeared in the columns of the *London Weekly Review*. Taken together, they have a bearing upon three questions of vital importance:—(1) The historical truth of the Book of Deuteronomy; (2) The true doctrine of Inspiration; (3) The duty of the Church to prevent such teaching in her theological halls as she considers to be dangerous and unsettling. On each one of these three questions the Church must give forth no uncertain sound when it may come before her for judgment in a competent shape. One of the Communications, now reprinted, deals in a popular manner with the second and third of these questions, and calls attention to what the author regards as Professor Smith's Theory of Inspiration. The other writers have confined their statements to the first question, so far as Professor Smith's writings are concerned, because they regard it as the only one which, in the process now depending in the Church Courts, has *ceased to be "sub judice."*

They wrote for the purpose of explaining and defending a decision of the General Assembly which had been assailed in the columns of the public Press, and which they regarded as a *final judgment* of the Supreme Court of the Free Church. They have observed, indeed, that questions regarding it are to be again pressed on the attention of the General Assembly, but the grounds on which this procedure is founded were not alleged at the time the deliverance was

adopted, nor do they find a place in the Reasons of Dissent given in by those members of Assembly who were opposed to it, and under no circumstances can it be admitted that the judgment of the General Assembly can be aught else than final.

Our reason for coming forward in defence of the Assembly's judgment was our deep sense of the importance of the question involved. It is not—although it has often been so represented—a difference of opinion as to the authorship of the Book of Deuteronomy which has to be settled; the great issue at stake is this:—*Is the Book of Deuteronomy historically true?* Did Moses speak the words and do the things which he is there said to have done and spoken? It has been said that the better course would have been to refute Professor Smith, and prove him to be wrong. With all deference, the burden lies on Professor Smith to *prove* that he is *right*. And as to refutation, the very use of having a Confession of Faith is that the Church may be spared the necessity of entering in every case of alleged departure from it on all the details which the question covers. No doubt there will be refutation when the full extent to which these opinions go becomes known to the Church. In the meantime, Principal Douglas's pamphlet is amply sufficient. The truth is, as we believe, that if it had so happened that Deuteronomy had stood in order after Chronicles, and had come down to us with an express tradition that it belonged to the times of the later kings of Judah, our critics would have found in the diction and matter of the Book better reasons for holding that it could not have been written later than the time of Moses than they now allege to support their opinion that it belongs to a more recent date.

The judgment of the General Assembly involves this proposition: that as the Book of Deuteronomy is professedly historical, the assertion that it is not historically true is inconsistent with the teaching of the Confession regarding the inspiration and infallible truth of the books of Scripture. To deny this proposition brings into doubt, as we believe, the

authenticity of one and *all* of them; and, just as a former generation in Scotland maintained the purity of God's Word by rejecting the claims of the Apocrypha, so we feel bound to defend it against the charge that any portions of it are not to be considered as true in the character in which they are presented to us; for it is vain to say that the author of Deuteronomy, writing about the time of Jeremiah, was not guilty of fraud, but merely availed himself of a well-understood literary licence to give his work greater weight and authority. On that supposition, the Church *has* been deceived—as far back as history and tradition go this deception has been in full force. If ever there was a generation that took Deuteronomy for what, on this hypothesis, it really was, let the fact be proved. But here proof utterly fails, nor, indeed, has ever been attempted.

Again, the same principles and facts which are relied on to establish the late origin of Deuteronomy may be applied, and on the Continent have been applied, to other portions of the Pentateuch with the same result. The Aaronic priesthood may be and has been declared to be an institution of no earlier date than the return from the Captivity; and, indeed, the whole basis in the Old Testament on which Christianity rests may by this destructive criticism be utterly swept away. The only defence against such desolation is the proposition on which the General Assembly has planted its foot—namely, that when an inspired book claims on the face of it to be historical it must be held to be *history which is infallibly true*. Admit the contrary theory and the Bible—all of it—ceases to be God's Word, in the sense, at least, in which that term has been understood in Scotland.

It is most important to bear in mind that the question before the General Assembly was not, as some have thought, whether Deuteronomy is declared *by the Confession of Faith* to be a historical book. This proposition was not affirmed on the one side, and on the other the motion submitted by Principal Rainy went far beyond the denial of it, for in dismissing the appeal and affirming the deliverance appealed

from, it would have virtually declared that any one is at liberty, within the Free Church, to teach that Deuteronomy, or any other book of the Bible, is not historical, but is written as if it were history, in order to give greater weight to the sentiments of the author.

Many persons supported that motion, not because they agreed with Professor Smith's views, but because they desired to maintain the utmost liberty of critical inquiry. Now, how far is this liberty to extend? If we permit one of our Professors to teach that Deuteronomy was written about the time of the Prophet Jeremiah by an author who wished to secure greater attention to his work by putting it forth in the name of Moses, and that in doing so he was only availing himself of a well-understood liberty which deceived no one; if this teaching be allowed in our schools of theology, can we refuse to permit any one of our Professors who may take the fancy, to teach that the Gospel according to John was not written before the middle of the second half of the second century; that it was written by an author whose object was to unite the two hostile parties into which the primitive Church had diverged; and that in putting his thoughts into the mouth of the beloved disciple and of his Master the author was only acting in conformity with literary precedents and the ideas of the epoch? Those who are acquainted with the controversies of the day know that all this has been maintained with regard to the fourth Gospel; but if the door is to be opened for such teaching within the Free Church we feel that all security is gone for the maintenance of even the fundamental doctrines of the Gospel.

WALTER WOOD.

N.B.—The attention of readers is called to the circumstance that while eight of the Communications appeared in July and August, 1878, an additional one is included in this republication, on the vital importance of the question as to Deuteronomy, by Sir Henry Moncreiff, which was published by the *Review* in January, 1879.



COMMUNICATIONS
ON THE CASE OF
PROFESSOR ROBERTSON SMITH,
IN THE
FREE CHURCH ASSEMBLY OF 1873.

I.

THE FIRST PARTICULAR OF THE FIRST ALTERNATIVE
CHARGE AGAINST PROFESSOR SMITH.

BY SIR HENRY MONCREIFF.

THE keenness of partisanship which has characterised much of the anonymous writing in favour of Professor Smith is conspicuous in its hiding from the public and the Church the thoroughly impartial and judicial spirit which pervaded the whole action of the very parties whom it fiercely attacks, in all the questions which arose previously to the consideration of the particular charge about Deuteronomy. Simply because I made up my mind conscientiously that Professor Smith's theory regarding that book could not be reconciled with our Confessional doctrine, the indignation of certain parties at my reaching that conclusion has made them shut their eyes to the fact that, in no less than four questions that arose previously to the question of Deuteronomy, I either moved in his favour or supported motions in his favour, and that everything I said on those questions and upon preliminary points tended in the direction for which he pleaded. The only one of these questions, however, of sufficient consequence to be dwelt upon is that which relates to the first

particular of the first charge—I mean the allegation that his statements were opposed to the Confessional doctrine by denying *that the Aaronic Priesthood was instituted in the wilderness.*

The judgment of the Assembly upon the allegation was in Professor Smith's favour. It found this part of the Libel irrelevant, and sustained the decision by the Presbytery of Aberdeen to that effect. I was myself the person to propose the judgment, and I was strongly supported in doing so by some of the very parties who afterwards joined me in the adverse sentence about Deuteronomy. Thus, up to the time when that adverse sentence was moved and seconded, not one step taken by us had the slightest appearance of undue bias or personal hostility. On the contrary, we did what we could to maintain a position of judicial impartiality. The fact that we did so will be manifest to those who may study the authentic report of our proceedings which will appear within the next fortnight.* And that fact may lead some people to a fairer estimate of what followed than their imaginations have yet allowed them to form.

At the same time, I confess that I committed in the matter an error of an opposite kind to that which is imputed to me in the subsequent judgment. I am accused of making a too complicated motion on the charge about Deuteronomy. I rather think that I made a too simple one on that about the Aaronic Priesthood.

Let me remind your readers that the relevancy of a charge in a Libel consists of two things. First, the thing charged must be opposed to our Confession or the Word of God. But, secondly, it must be clear that the statements of the accused party amount to the thing charged. Though it be certain that the thing charged is opposed to our Confession, the charge is not relevant unless the quoted statements amount to what is charged.

Now it was exclusively on the ground that the *statements quoted from Professor Smith's writings did not amount to a denial of the institution of the Aaronic Priesthood in the wilderness*, that I moved against the relevancy of the charge. I said distinctly that I should have held it relevant if such

* See Free Church Blue-Book for 1878, pp. 47–79.

denial had been expressed in those statements. No member of Assembly indicated any difference of opinion on that question. Consequently the Assembly did not find that any view opposed to the conviction which God's people have gathered from the Divine Word throughout many generations as to the divine institution of the Aaronic Priesthood in the wilderness, can be tolerated in our Church.

Some writers for the public press have, I find, interpreted the Assembly's decision as if it had given such a liberty. I regret, therefore, that the judgment did not contain in itself distinct evidence of the only ground on which it proceeded. The charge ought to have been found irrelevant expressly on the ground that the statements quoted in the minor proposition did not amount to the error charged in the major. In this way the Assembly would not have been misunderstood as sanctioning or allowing an error which I am persuaded it would repudiate.

Some of our friends may thus see that there may be good reasons for making a motion apparently more complicated than necessary, when there is no good cause for supposing that it is made so in order to secure a larger number of votes. I propose, in my next Communication, to enter upon an explanation of what took place in relation to the charge about Deuteronomy.

II.

INTENTION AND EFFECT OF THE ASSEMBLY'S JUDGMENT ON THE SECOND PARTICULAR OF THE FIRST ALTERNATIVE CHARGE AGAINST PROFESSOR SMITH.

BY SIR HENRY MONCREIFF.

THIS judgment was moved by myself, and seconded by Dr. William Wilson, of Dundee. It was carefully constructed by myself, and shown to some parties as what I might move in case of not hearing anything from Professor Smith or his friends at the bar to alter my conviction. But I intimated my determination to listen to him attentively, and to give all due weight to what he said. I carried out this determination fully and literally. I sat near him, and heard his whole pleading. No consultation with any party affected the terms of my motion. It was all my own. I did consult with parties who, I knew, were inclined to the same view, for the purpose of securing a right place and due prominence for this part of the case. But not one sentence of the judgment was contrived with the object of gaining a larger number of votes than might otherwise have been obtained. The very unworthy imputation has been made, that it was framed in order that the feeling against loose views of inspiration might be more readily enlisted on its side. The persons entertaining this conception do not adequately consider the responsibility of a judicial decision. Having a strong sense of that responsibility, and having striven to act under it, I am disposed to repudiate most indignantly the idea of any such calculation having influenced what I proposed and carried.

There is another thing which the same persons have overlooked. They have failed to notice the considerable number of members who did not vote at all. They have failed to see

that the objections taken to the terms of my motion, and the powerful manner in which these were pressed by Principal Rainy, along with the earnest support given to his view by other speakers of weight and influence, had the effect of startling the minds of many who agreed with me in substance, and would have concurred in a simpler motion; so that, under the immediate excitement, they did not follow me in the division, and lost the opportunity of expressing their opinion. I have abundant evidence that, had it not been for a difficulty about the wording, the judgment would have been carried by a majority at least twice as large as it actually obtained; and that, upon reflection, much regret is felt by some of the parties that they did not act more decisively. The number voting for it was 301, the votes against it being 278. The friends of Professor Smith represent this result as a moral victory for them. I rather think that it was a moral victory for us and a moral defeat for them that our motion was carried at all, under the disadvantages I have spoken of and in opposition to the strong and extraordinary influences which were brought to bear against it. I am persuaded that these influences will not prevail to the same extent again, and that the predominant feeling in our Church is decidedly in favour of the conclusion at which the Assembly arrived.

Before directing the attention of your readers to the terms of the motion carried, I think it well, for the sake of distinctness, to enumerate the erroneous representations that have been made regarding it. They are the following:—

1. It was constructed in an irregular manner for the purpose of carrying more votes than a simpler motion would have done. I have already met this statement in a manner that must satisfy every honourable mind.

2. It did carry more votes than a simpler one would have done. I have already shown the groundlessness of this imagination by adducing good reasons for an entirely opposite conviction.

3. It proceeded on the sense ascribed to a declaration of Professor Smith in his defence, on which he had no notice to plead either from the bar or the House, on which he did not plead, and on which it did not appear that he had been dealt with for explanation or otherwise in any Court, and was therefore incompetent as a judicial sentence.

4. It had been argued for from the same materials (upon which Professor Smith had not been heard), and was thus all the more incompetent.

5. In order to establish its conclusion, it made assumptions with respect to the Professor's views which were repudiated by him.

6. It assumed that a statement by Professor Smith in his defence could communicate a new responsibility to his theory of Deuteronomy.

7. It condemned him, not only for his theory of Deuteronomy, but for his separate declarations on the subject of Inspiration.

8. In my speech for the motion I imputed to Professor Smith the opinion that only parts of Scripture are inspired, in direct opposition to some explicit statements of his printed defence, and I founded my conclusion partly upon this imputation.

9. In my reply, while taking notice of a letter addressed to me by him, and quoting some passages from his defence, I declined to quote others that were fitted to vindicate him from the imputation of holding parts of Scripture not to be inspired.

10. The full explanations given by the Professor when pleading at the bar on the *third* particular of the *first* charge were such as to overthrow the ground of the judgment in the previous case, and had the effect of practically reversing that judgment by a majority in his favour.

Now I assert with confidence, and am prepared to prove, with respect to the eight representations which stand last in the above enumeration, that every one of them is unjust, unreasonable, and without foundation in fact. I have already committed myself elsewhere to the opinion that such of them as are included in the Reasons of Dissent, signed by Principal Rainy and others, belong to one of the most unjust and unreasonable documents that was ever presented to a Church Court or to the public. I have reason to believe that this opinion is largely shared by others who usually agree with Principal Rainy in ecclesiastical action. In common with them, I entertain the warmest feelings of respect and regard for him, and I greatly admire the Christian spirit and temper which he displays, even when annoyed by such a difference

of view from his own as that which the present emergency has brought out on the part of those who enjoy his friendship and confidence. But, in common with them also, I am painfully constrained to protest against the course which he was unhappily induced to follow about the judgment in the matter of Deuteronomy. Faithfulness to my view of what concerns truth and reason, and of what is needful for our Church, obliges me to use no weaker language, in speaking of the Reasons of Dissent, than that which I have employed.

The judgment of the Assembly was in the following terms :—

“The General Assembly sustain the dissent and complaint against the judgment of the Presbytery in relation to the Second Particular, as applied to the First Charge, and reverse the judgment of the Presbytery so far as to find that part of the libel relevant, to the effect that the statements quoted in the minor proposition as those of Professor Smith regarding the Book of Deuteronomy, amount to what is expressed in the said particular, and are opposed, in their legitimate results, to the supposition of the book being a thoroughly inspired historical record, according to the teaching of the Westminster Confession, *while his declarations on the subject of Inspiration are the reverse of satisfactory, and do not indicate his reception of the book in that character.*”

I have printed the latter clause in italics in order that your readers may more easily distinguish it from what goes before it. If they look accurately at the distinction they will see that the preceding part alone contains the deliverance on the relevancy of the libel, and that if the latter clause can be vindicated at all, the vindication must rest on the ground that the Assembly, in deciding against Professor Smith, were called upon to take some notice of his defence, just as a civil court accompanies its deliverance on the direct merits of a case by the statement that it “repels the defences.” That statement by a civil court does not involve any judgment on the merits of what the defences contain beyond the bearing which the party pleads that they have upon the main question before the court; and the latter clause of my motion cannot be reasonably interpreted as declaring any judgment upon the Professor’s declarations regarding Inspiration, beyond finding that they furnish no satisfactory

objection to the judgment on the relevancy, which the previous sentences contain. Let me endeavour to show your readers that those previous sentences are complete in themselves in their bearing on the relevancy, that they require no aid from the latter clause, and that it was neither intended nor fitted to give them any aid.

I am far from maintaining, in opposition to the view of some concurring friends, that the construction of my motion might not have been much better. But I hope to make it apparent that much more may be said for its construction than appears at first sight. Apart from the latter clause, it was minutely criticised in the discussion by Professor Smith's supporters, and sometimes, I think, in a very captious and puerile manner. It was objected that it sustained the dissent and complaint, and reversed the judgment of the Presbytery only so FAR as to find, &c., as if that expression meant that, in some respect, the Presbytery's judgment might stand. This objection proceeds from ignorance of an old principle in our ecclesiastical procedure, that the Superior Court must avoid committing itself unduly to an approval of the action and language of the party whose sentence or whose complaint it sustains, and may wisely consider it best to express its determination in its own language rather than in that either of an inferior court or of dissentients. In this case it was desirable for the Assembly not to be held as adopting the terms either of the motion made by the dissentients in the Presbytery or of the reason for their dissent. The case was of such large and public importance as to justify a special expression of the view taken by the Assembly. The words *so far* cannot possibly leave anything to the Presbytery which the extended deliverance has not left to them.

It is quite apparent that this deliverance completely exhausts the whole question of relevancy raised by the libel on the subject of Deuteronomy, and it is easy to be satisfied that it does not change or go beyond the charge in the libel to the slightest extent. Let me again remind your readers that there are two points in a question of relevancy, namely, the opposition of the thing charged to the Confession or to the Word of God, and the fact of the quotations from the Professor's writings amounting to the thing charged. If the judgment had simply found the charge relevant, it would

really have settled both these points. But its having done so would not have been clear to every inquirer. I am not sure that the meaning would have been clear to all our ministers and elders. For I find that some of them imagine erroneously that the question of relevancy only involves the point of the thing charged being opposed to the Standards, and that the question of the correspondence of the quotations to it belongs, not to relevancy, but to *probation*. Such a view would leave it open to the Presbytery of Aberdeen to take up now the whole question of what the extracts in the libel mean, whereas the only question remaining for them by way of *probation* is whether the extracts are true extracts from writings by Professor Smith, and truly represent his opinions. The terms of the Assembly's judgment were intended and are fitted to make it manifest that the second particular of the first charge is found relevant in all respects, and to explain clearly to the Church and the public wherein the relevancy consists. As matter of convenience, it deals first with the second point of relevancy—that is, with the correspondence of the alleged statements of Professor Smith to the thing charged in the libel. The thing charged is “The publishing and promulgating of the opinion that the Book of Inspired Scripture called Deuteronomy does not possess the character of an historical record, but was made to assume it by a writer of a much later age, who therein, in the name of God, presented in dramatic form instructions and laws as proceeding from the mouth of Moses, though these never were and never could have been uttered by him.” Our judgment finds this particular of the libel “relevant, to the effect,” first of all, “that the statements quoted amount to what is expressed in the said particular.” That is exactly what is asserted on this point in the libel. Our judgment finds the particular relevant to the effect, secondly, “that these statements are opposed, in their legitimate results, to the supposition of the book being a thoroughly inspired historical record, according to the teaching of the Westminster Confession.” If the libel does not mean this conclusion, I do not know what it means. It expressly assumes that the book is professedly historical and thus infallibly true as history. It says that the opinion referred to is “opposed to the doctrine of the immediate inspiration, infallible truth, and Divine authority of the Holy Scriptures,

as set forth in the Scriptures themselves and in the Confession of Faith." How could the opinion that the book is not an historical record be opposed to the doctrine of the Confession on inspiration, except by holding that the Confession requires us to believe in it as a thoroughly inspired *historical* record?

Thus my motion not only found the libel thoroughly relevant on the subject of Deuteronomy, but exhibited clearly what the relevancy involved, and what the view of the Assembly was on the solemn subject to which it referred. I do not believe that the Church will suffer the judgment on that subject to be trifled with. The personal character and ability of Professor Smith are undeniable. No one of those who voted against him desires to lose his services. But the character of the Free Church is of still greater importance.

In my next Communication I hope to meet more directly the allegations against my motion and my own action in the case.

III.

OBJECTIONS TO THE DECISION ON DEUTERONOMY.

BY SIR HENRY MONCREIFF.

THE first of the Reasons of Dissent by Principal Rainy and others is as follows :—

“Because the Judgment is incompetent as a judicial sentence, in respect that it proceeds on the sense ascribed to a declaration of Professor Smith in his defence, on which he had no notice to plead either from the bar or the House, on which he did not plead, and on which it does not appear that he has been dealt with for explanation or otherwise in any court, and in respect that the Judgment was argued for from the same materials, and that Professor Smith was not heard thereon.”

If there were the slightest ground, either in the Judgment itself or in the argument for it, to support the allegations in point of fact made by this Reason, I should myself be one of the foremost to concur in it. I do not hold Principal Rainy responsible for all the representations which have since sprung out of it. He has nothing to do with them. But he has laid the foundation for them, and I am compelled to expose the injustice and unreasonableness of the foundation, in order that confidence may be withheld from the structure that has been raised upon it.

The Judgment does not ascribe any sense to any declarations of Professor Smith in his defence. Much less does it found or proceed upon any such sense. And it was not argued for on the ground of materials furnished by the defence. Such materials were alluded to only for the purpose of getting quit of them, and preventing their interference with the wholly independent argument upon which the Judgment is based. Let me present to your readers a brief summary of that argument, and thereby exhibit the certainty of it's requiring no aid from any illegitimate source.

The charge in the libel is that the opinion of Professor Smith on the subject of Deuteronomy is opposed to the doctrine of its immediate inspiration, infallible truth, and divine authority, as set forth in the Scriptures and in the Confession. To make out this charge, it is necessary to prove, first, that the statements of Professor Smith, quoted in the libel, represent the book as not being a thoroughly *historical* record; and, secondly, that, while it is professedly historical, the Confession of Faith requires us to receive it, and to hold its infallible truth in that character. It is not necessary to prove that Professor Smith denies its thorough inspiration, or to assume that he holds it to be inspired in any particular sense. If it be clear that the statements quoted indicate that it is not *thoroughly historical*, and that, it being professedly *historical*, the Confession requires us to believe in its infallible truth, then those statements are not consistent with the supposition of its being a thoroughly inspired *historical* record according to the Confession. This argument, if its particulars be made good, is complete in itself, and needs no assistance from any view that may be taken of Professor Smith's declarations in his defence on the subject of inspiration. But this was precisely my argument in support of the Judgment.

I assumed, first [of all, the statements quoted in the libel as proving the opinion promulgated by the Professor to be that the Book of Deuteronomy was either in whole or in part not strictly historical, but a representation in dramatic form through the use of what he maintained to be a legitimate literary method. I argued, secondly, that the Book was, on the face of it, a professedly historical record throughout, and that God had presented it to us as such. I explained that this was a matter that did not admit of demonstration, but that the moral evidence for it upon a careful survey of the contents was conclusive. I argued, thirdly, that a true interpretation of the several parts of the Confession on the subject of the Scriptures made it assert the infallible truth of the Book in its historical character. I maintained that the assertion of its infallible truth must signify its infallible truth in the character in which it professedly comes to us. Consequently the opinion exhibited in the quoted statements appeared to me and to the Assembly opposed to the Confes-

sional doctrine of its inspiration. This conclusion was enough to justify the judgment, and it did not involve any deliverance upon the views of inspiration maintained by Professor Smith. It simply meant that we did not see how his published opinion about Deuteronomy could be logically reconciled with the Confessional doctrine. I think that my argument was strictly logical, and that it introduced no extraneous element whatever.

If this be indeed the case, how then, it may be asked, came Principal Rainy to utter the following sentences ?

Passing from a course of reasoning about the connection of the historical character of Deuteronomy with the Confession, he said :—

“ But much more than that, for that was quite a subordinate point. The other point was with regard to the way in which the question of inspiration was brought into this finding, and so brought into the whole argument of Sir Henry's speech. . . Surely, to make out their count, they must show that Professor Smith denied or virtually opposed the doctrine of the Confession in the extracts given under this count. It would not do for their purpose on this count to say that he denied it somewhere else. They must show that he denied or questioned the doctrine of inspiration under this count in the theory here represented and not somewhere else. And now observe what it was necessary to do in order to make out the argument. On this count that explanation of Professor Smith's was brought in which was in the defences, and it was made use of in this way :—It was made use of to suggest that Professor Smith's theory of Deuteronomy need not be held up to be consistent with inspiration because his theory of inspiration, as explained, did not suggest that his view of Deuteronomy would be consistent with inspiration . . . the argument must proceed precisely as if Professor Smith had never said a word about that subject of inspiration.”

I have already shown, I think, that my argument was altogether independent of anything said by Professor Smith about inspiration, except in the extracts under this count in the libel. How, then, came Principal Rainy to misunderstand and misinterpret my argument so entirely? I have every reason to believe that it was thoroughly apprehended in the view I have given of it by many intelligent and scholarly members who voted with me. How did my excellent friend, the Principal, fall into so egregious and injurious a mistake? It is still more surprising that, in his Reasons of Dissent and in his speech, he should dwell on the point of Professor Smith not having been heard or dealt with about his special view

on inspiration, when I had just before, at the conclusion of my speech, expressed myself in the following words:—

“They were not now entitled to try Professor Smith on the question of inspiration. It would be quite wrong to libel a man for one thing and to find him guilty of another.”

The Principal takes no notice of these words. Upon his view of my speech he would not have known what to say to them. But surely he ought to have asked himself how they could be reconciled with that view before he committed himself or others to it. Was it just or reasonable, in the face of my own language, to assume that a special sense put upon declarations in the defence was essential not only to my motion, but to my *whole argument*? Your readers will easily see that such a representation by Principal Rainy was fitted to startle and impress a number of earnest minds, and that if it had no good foundation it was specially unjust and unreasonable. The words that I have quoted from the close of my own speech prove that it was in some respects the reverse of the reality. No one was more opposed than I was myself to the idea of condemning the Professor on account of his declarations in his defence. And, knowing as I do how well my argument was appreciated by those who carefully followed it, I am constrained to conclude that Principal Rainy and others did not attend to it with that accuracy of regard to the relation of its several parts which the nature of the case demanded.

On that supposition I can see two misleading influences which may have operated upon them. One of these influences is the conception that the charge in the libel is equivalent to a charge against the Professor of personally and directly or consciously denying the doctrine of Inspiration. By his language the Principal seems to sanction that conception. It accords with the strong desire of the Professor and his friends to shut the Church into a corner in which she must either convict him of an offence requiring immediate deposition or refrain from censuring his opinions. I hope the Church will not allow herself to get into that position. But I think that the line taken by Dr. Rainy is unintentionally calculated to draw her into it. Of course, if the charge in the libel means that the Professor personally and directly or consciously denies the doctrine of Inspiration, then I can see how

Principal Rainy should consider it essential to my argument in support of the libel that I should make out the view of Inspiration taken by the person libelled to be unsound. He does not observe, however, that I do not regard the libel as having to do with the Professor's personal belief in Inspiration, and that I think it reasonable to hold that his opinion as to Deuteronomy is proved by fair logical inference to be opposed to the Confessional doctrine, while not fastening the inference upon him personally, and while not accusing him of personally and directly or consciously denying that doctrine. Consequently, no particular sense ascribed to his declarations is at all essential to my argument, which would remain the same though he were to avow his adherence to the very strictest theory of Inspiration. What we aim at is not to punish Professor Smith, but to condemn his theory as one that must not be taught in our halls or promulgated by our professors; whatever may be the consequences to him personally. So far as I can see, the object of keen partisans against us is to defeat this aim. Their success would, I believe, be a great disaster for the cause of the Free Church of Scotland and for the interests of sacred truth.

The other misleading influence must have been derived from the fact that a somewhat lengthened portion of my speech was occupied with the consideration of an interpretation put by Professor Smith in his defence upon the fifth section of the first chapter of the Confession of Faith. It was essential to the integrity of my argument that I should establish the truth of the interpretation which I myself put upon that section. I had to do this not only against the Professor's interpretation, but against any similar interpretation by any other party. Those who rightly followed my argument knew that in the part of my speech referred to, I was arguing, not against Professor Smith's views of Inspiration as unsound, but for an interpretation of the Confession which would make it assert the infallible truth of Deuteronomy as throughout an historical record. That was the only question then before me.

But will any man, having any adequate apprehension of judicial matters, deny that when an opposite interpretation had not only been inserted elaborately in a printed defence, but had been circulated for weeks previously to the meeting

of Assembly among the members, I was not called upon, in proposing a judgment, to take notice of that interpretation and to argue for its erroneousness? In doing so I certainly pointed out what I thought legitimate consequences from it, though I was far from suggesting that the Professor saw those consequences or adopted them. I am well aware that, in the course of such an argument, I may have made use of expressions which, whether when I uttered them, or as they appear in the reports, seemed to persons who had not fully followed my reasoning, or who heard or saw them without accurate connection with the context, to involve a special assault upon the views of the Professor. In my reply at the close of the discussion, I intimated my sincere regret if I had thus unintentionally appeared to assail him on a matter not before the Court, and I disclaimed the purpose of, either by my speech or my motion, founding my judgment of the relevancy upon the declarations in the defence.

Thus, the Assembly was made fully aware before the vote, that the ground ascribed to us by Principal Rainy was disclaimed by us, and that our motion was intended to stand upon its own independent footing. There is no excuse, therefore, for the allegation that the vote was come to upon a false issue. It was not come to upon any ground that could be upset by any subsequent decision.

I have still to explain the real meaning of the last clause of the judgment, and to vindicate my own action from the allegation of unfairness towards the Professor. But I think it will be better, before dealing with these topics, that the nature and meaning of the judgment on the third particular of the First Charge should be clearly explained by a qualified person. For that judgment has been represented as involving a reversal of the one on Deuteronomy. No representation could be more foolish and unfounded. It springs out of the idea that the previous vote proceeded on a particular view of the Professor's declarations, and that in his pleading on the latter case he overthrew that view. I have already shown that no declaration by him could affect the force of the real argument as to Deuteronomy. But it is desirable that your readers should have a clear account set before them as to the reasons for the decision on the third particular.

I was myself precluded from voting in that case by the

accidental circumstance of my having been prevented from being present when the dissentients from the sentence of the Presbytery were heard at the bar. My absence on any such occasion is always with me a reason for not voting, whatever may be my opinion. But I hope that you will receive a communication from one who took part in the discussion.

IV.

THE THIRD PARTICULAR UNDER THE FIRST CHARGE.

BY REV. WILLIAM WILSON, D.D.

IN the Communications Nos. II. and III. Sir Henry Moncreiff has shown what the judgment of the Assembly really was on the second particular under the first alternative charge in the libel against Professor Smith, and the grounds on which that judgment was based. It might not have been necessary to say anything as to the judgment of the Assembly on the third particular under the same charge, but for the fact that the Assembly's judgment on this particular has been represented as a virtual reversal of their judgment on the second particular, and an undoing, in virtue of Professor Smith's pleading at the bar, of what had been done earlier on the same day.

It was perhaps not very unnatural on the part of those who approved of and adopted Dr. Rainy's reasons of dissent to arrive at such a conclusion. They assumed that Professor Smith had been condemned without being heard as to his views on Inspiration, and that, after his statement at the bar, the Assembly repented of their previous action under the second particular, and by a large majority acquitted him of the charge under the third particular. How erroneous such a conclusion was has been made sufficiently apparent by Sir Henry Moncreiff in his demonstration that the Assembly's judgment on the second particular was not, in any degree, based upon what Professor Smith had stated in his defence on the subject of Inspiration; but solely upon the fact that his statements regarding the Book of Deuteronomy are opposed in their legitimate results to the supposition of the Book being a thoroughly inspired historical record, according to the teaching of the Westminster Confession.

But apart from that it is surely a blind and reckless con-

founding of things that differ to represent the judgment of the Assembly on the third particular as at all affecting the judgment they had already pronounced on the second particular. It might with just as much reason be alleged that the unanimous judgment of the Assembly finding the first particular not relevant was repented of so soon as it had been pronounced, and that this judgment was virtually reversed by their judgment on the second particular.

I think it is safe to assume that the Assembly were not so ignorant or so fickle as to be capable of acting in such a way. They considered each charge separately and gave upon each an independent judgment. They found the first particular not relevant because it did not appear certain that Professor Smith held or had stated the views imputed to him. They found the second particular relevant on the ground as already stated. They found the third particular not relevant on entirely independent grounds.

The fact of their being a third as well as a second particular is enough to show that the two were not identical, and that there might reasonably be a different judgment on the one from what was given on the other.

In the third particular there is nothing at all about the Book of Deuteronomy. It charges Professor Smith with lowering "the character of the inspired writings by ignoring their Divine authorship, and by representing the sacred writers as taking freedoms and committing errors like other authors; as giving explanations that were unnecessary and incorrect; as putting fictitious speeches into the mouths of their historical characters; as giving inferences of their own for facts; as describing arrangements as made use of in their complete form at a certain time which were not completed till long afterwards; and as writing under the influence of party spirit and for party purposes."

The question which the Assembly had to determine was whether this charge, certainly a very grave one, was relevant not merely to the effect of inferring censure if it was proved, but whether it was relevant to the effect of being sustained by quotations from Professor Smith's writings. If it was not so sustained it could not be found relevant as a charge against him.

Now, no one in the Assembly proposed to find the charge

relevant as it stood. The one motion was that the Assembly sustain the Dissent and Complaint, and reverse the judgment of the Presbytery to the extent of finding that the statement of Professor Smith, that an inspired writer allowed himself the same freedoms as were taken by ancient historians is, in the sense in which it appears to the General Assembly, to be used by him so unguarded and extreme as to be incompatible with the inspiration and infallible truth of the sacred Scriptures. The other motion was, that the Assembly dismiss the Dissent and Complaint, and affirm the judgment of the Presbytery—that is, that the Assembly find the charge not relevant.

It was the latter motion which, by a large majority, became the judgment of the Assembly. It does not necessarily follow from this judgment that Professor Smith is declared to be entirely blameless in regard to his statements about what an inspired writer allowed himself to do, and that his statements on this subject may not be found unguarded and extreme. The judgment is simply that his statements do not contradict or are not opposed to the doctrine of the immediate inspiration, infallible truth, and Divine authority of the Holy Scriptures. It is still open to the Church Courts to consider, under the second alternative charge in the libel, whether Professor Smith's statements are not such as by their ill-considered and unguarded setting forth of speculations of a critical kind, tend to awaken doubt, especially in the case of students, of the Divine truth, inspiration, and authority of any of the Books of Scripture.

It is not my part to vindicate the judgment of the Assembly. I have exhausted my functions in showing what the judgment is, and in showing that in no sense and to no extent can it be regarded as weakening or traversing the judgment regarding the views of Professor Smith on the Book of Deuteronomy.

V.

THE DECLARATIONS OF PROFESSOR SMITH IN HIS
DEFENCE.

BY SIR HENRY MONCREIFF.

THESE declarations, as contained in a printed statement, and as made orally at the bar, are considered by some members of last Assembly to prove the Professor's orthodoxy and spirituality. Other members object to them as indicating unsoundness. This difference of opinion relates to their bearing on the subject of Inspiration. My disclaimer in my reply at the close of the discussion on the question regarding Deuteronomy, of any intention to assail them, and my repetition of that disclaimer in my last communication, did not mean that I was satisfied with their orthodoxy any more than it signified my conviction of their heterodoxy. It simply meant that I repudiated the supposition of my having imputed heterodoxy to them in my argument about his theory of Deuteronomy, or of my having founded my judgment of it in the slightest degree upon such imputation. I agree with Dr. Rainy that to have done so would have been quite illegitimate.

What, then, was the intention, and what is the effect, it may be asked, of the last clause of my motion as adopted by the Assembly? It is in the following terms:—

“While his declarations on the subject of Inspiration are the reverse of satisfactory, and do not indicate his reception of the book in that character.”

The chief point in the first reason of dissent by Dr. Rainy, Sheriff Campbell, and others, is that our judgment “proceeds on the sense ascribed to a declaration of Professor Smith.” Surely when this allegation is placed in close proximity to the terms of the clause quoted above, your readers may see at a glance how strangely and ridiculously without founda-

tion it is. I could conceive of the clause being objected to, because not specifying any declaration and not defining wherein the want of satisfactoriness lies. But when it does not specify, and does not define, I could not have conceived beforehand that many persons of approved wisdom and discretion, such as Dr. Rainy or Sheriff Campbell, would have committed themselves to the assertion that we ascribed a sense to something which we have neither specified nor defined, while we said not a word about any sense whatever ascribed to anything whatever.

When I heard the objection raised, my astonishment was so great, and my consciousness of its injustice so clear, that my first impulse was to declare emphatically that the obnoxious clause had no essential connection with the decision on the relevancy, and that, if the Assembly chose, it might be withdrawn. Dr. Anderson Kirkwood, in seconding Dr. Rainy's motion, spoke of my declaration as indicating that my motion had been very crudely drawn. It has been imagined, I see, that this observation must have been felt by me as very severe. On the contrary, it did not disturb me at all. For I simply saw in it a specimen of the delusive conceptions into which an acute and sagacious mind may be occasionally drawn. Dr. Kirkwood's usual sagacity might have shown him that my somewhat hasty declaration was simply a proof of groundlessness in the allegation made by the objectors, and of my utter surprise at finding it brought forward.

As the latter clause of the Assembly's deliverance, though not bearing itself on the *relevancy* of the charge about Deuteronomy, had reference exclusively to that charge, the word *satisfactory* as used in it cannot be reasonably understood in the wide sense of what would satisfy on the subject of the Professor's orthodoxy regarding Inspiration or any other theological question. It must be taken in the restricted sense of what would satisfy as a defence against our view of his theory on Deuteronomy. Let me ask your readers to observe that, in this restricted sense, no declaration of adherence even to the strictest conceptions of plenary verbal Inspiration could be satisfactory. For no such declaration by him can overcome the force of legitimate inferences drawn from his view of that book. The theory regarding it

set forth in the extracts is condemned as contrary to the standards, even though he be found maintaining its Inspiration in the most orthodox manner.

At the same time, I acknowledge that if he had presented to us in defence what appeared to us a clear and unmistakable expression of opinion in accordance with the Confessional doctrine as to the infallible truth of the written Word, I should not have proposed a different judgment on the relevancy, but I should have been disposed to append to it a resolution to the effect that, before pronouncing sentence in the case, there should be a special conference with Mr. Smith, which might lead to a modification of the sentence. I made no such proposal because there did not seem to me to be any such clear and unmistakable expression in the defence. The Professor's declarations were to me the *reverse* of satisfactory as a defence, because they not only fell short of being an answer to the independent arguments for the relevancy of the libel, but because they puzzled me, and seemed to raise some very doubtful questions. I know of nothing more unsatisfactory in statements than that they should be puzzling and difficult to be reconciled with one another. That is the idea indicated by the words "*reverse of satisfactory*." The declarations were the reverse of satisfactory as a defence in meeting the charge about Deuteronomy, because the Assembly did not fully understand what their meaning was. We did not pronounce upon their essential merits. We merely put them aside as being the reverse of available. We added that they did "not indicate" the Professor's "reception of the book" of Deuteronomy in the character of an inspired *historical* record. Of course they could not do so without contradicting his theory. Besides, in his printed defence (p. 32) he expressly declares his contention to be "that a book, or part of a book, which at first sight may seem to be strictly historical, appears on closer consideration not to be so." He said in his oral pleading that the legislative part was *inspired law*, while maintaining that the apparent assignment to it of its place in the order of events was not inspired *history*, because not literal history at all.

Thus the Assembly, by the clause objected to, did nothing more than dismiss the defence as unavailable. It was argued that the declarations on Inspiration had no reference to the

charge about Deuteronomy, and that we were not entitled to take notice of them. But they formed part of a long introduction in the Professor's printed statement to his consideration of the particular charges. The application of that introduction was not limited by him to one or more of the charges, and, having been circulated among the members for some weeks previously, it challenged attention. It is most unreasonable, therefore, to find fault with our adverting to the declarations which it contains as inadequate for their purpose. Moreover, in his speech at the bar, Professor Smith himself complained that Principal Brown had not alluded to the statements in the printed defence. But if parties at the bar were called upon to meet it, surely the Court was warranted in dealing with it.

I may be excused for briefly explaining my personal position with respect to representations and complaints by Professor Smith and others. In his speech at the bar, in relation to the third particular (on which Dr. Wilson has written), the Professor spoke of the party against him having followed my example in dwelling chiefly upon his declarations regarding Inspiration. He further said that so far as he could *grasp* my argument, that appeared to be the chief point in it. This statement confirmed my impression that, however great may be his ability and learning, his power of *grasping* an argument against him requires strengthening. I have shown, I think, in my previous communication, that any alleged unsoundness in his declarations was not only not the chief point of my argument, but formed no part of it at all. Consequently, it is evident that, along with the dissentients, he missed the meaning and force of what I maintained; while I know through many assurances that they were fully seen and appreciated by members of the highest intelligence. The truth is that, unconsciously to themselves, it suited himself and his supporters better, to take the view which they did of my statements than to look in the face what these really amounted to. He and they complained of my imputing to him the opinion that parts of the Bible were inspired and other parts not inspired, understanding the supposed opinion to signify that some books, or some chapters, or some verses might not be counted as inspired.

As such an opinion is directly opposed to what he had

explicitly stated in his printed answer to the libel, they might, in the exercise of sober judgment, have given me credit for having carefully read and considered the statements of that answer, and they might have seen that my language applied not to what he had therein disclaimed, but to what he had expressly maintained. I have already shown that, in the words complained of, I was alluding to his interpretation of the fifth section of the first chapter of the Confession with regard to the infallible truth attributed to the Scriptures. That interpretation has nothing to do with any distinction between particular books, chapters, or verses; and my criticism did not extend beyond the point of his interpretation. My use of the words "part" or "parts" seems to have misled him and others. In their keenness they did not observe how closely I was keeping to the point actually raised by his interpretation. The result of that interpretation is in his own words (Answer, p. 26) that, while we may say that "*Scripture is the infallible Word of God,*" "we cannot invert the proposition, and say that the infallibility which belongs to the Divine substance of the Word extends to the outward form of the record, or that the self-evidencing power of the Word as a rule of faith and life extends to expressions in Scripture which are indifferent to faith and life."

This statement does not conflict with the view, indicated by the Professor at the bar, that God may be heard speaking in every verse of Scripture, and that no verse should be regarded as if it had nothing to do with salvation or spiritual profit. He did not require to instruct any of us by reference to Calvin and other authorities upon that subject. Many of us had learnt from our earliest years to consider with reverence that God thus speaks to us by His Spirit in every part of the written Word. Persons taught by the late Dr. Andrew Thomson and his contemporaries do not stand in need of guidance from a young professor in these days upon what has always been to them a fundamental principle. Their own study of the Word itself has, by God's grace, been quite enough for their thorough establishment in that principle. And the fact of his somewhat presumptuous suggestion to the contrary leads to the inquiry whether the foundations of his own theology have been laid as largely on the old

Scottish basis as he thinks they are supported by the scholarship of Europe.

But his statement implies that there may be *expressions* in any verse of Scripture which, being indifferent to faith and life, are not to be regarded as possessing that character of infallible truth which the Confession ascribes to Scripture, and the full assurance of which the Spirit of God alone conveys. A book is made up of *expressions*, and my difficulty is, how I can regard the book as inspired if its expressions are not inspired. An *expression* in a verse is *part* of the verse, and my difficulty is, upon Professor Smith's interpretation, how I am to know which *part* of a verse possesses the character of infallible truth and which *part* does not? I cannot see my way through this difficulty, and he has done nothing to relieve me by any subsequent statement.

When I gave my explanation in reply on the matter of Deuteronomy, I was not making quotations for the purpose of proving the Professor to be unsound. Dr. Candlish interrupted my explanation, intended to disclaim the imputation of unsoundness on Inspiration as bearing upon my motion. I do not always hear distinctly, and I did not know what Dr. Candlish meant. I declined to be interrupted in my explanation. But I did not decline to read anything which Professor Smith or his friends might think necessary, and would have gladly done so had I been asked before I concluded. I expressly disclaimed the idea of making him responsible for any inferences which my difficulty suggested.

My last explanation is, that when in the College Committee I agreed that there was no ground for a libel for heresy against Professor Smith, I looked upon a libel for heresy in the strictest sense as a libel charging him with a personal and direct or conscious denial of the Confessional doctrine of Inspiration. I thought I had evidence that he thoroughly held that doctrine, and I did not think it reasonable to make him responsible for my own logical inferences from his theory of Deuteronomy. But I thought that theory dangerous and unsettling, just because the natural and legitimate inference from it was opposed to the inspiration of the book. I would not have had a libel framed against him had he not demanded one. But I would have had steps taken to prevent the teaching or promulgation of that theory by a Professor of

our Church. A libel, however, having been prepared on his demand, and it having been conceded that the libel was relevant if the logical result of his published opinion was opposed to the Confessional doctrine, I felt constrained to take the ground which I occupied in the Assembly.

Many members of Assembly and many devoted ministers and elders of our Church are deeply concerned about the views of Inspiration still avowed by Professor Smith. They think them incompatible with the position of a Free Church Theological Professor. Others are satisfied with his substantial orthodoxy, while they admire his ability, attainments, and Christian character. I do not grudge him that admiration, while I keep in mind that the most dangerous errors have originated with loveable and devoted servants of Christ. I give no opinion as to his orthodoxy or heterodoxy on Inspiration, because the question may be raised by another libel, or in some other competent form, and I should wish to keep myself free to judge of it if raised.

I think, however, that the judgment of the Assembly on his theory of Deuteronomy may prevent him from occupying his chair while he continues to hold that theory as it is indicated in the quotations of the libel. But I think we should carefully avoid doing anything to imply that a man who appears to hold the Confessional doctrine of Inspiration, should be excluded from our ministry or eldership because he feels conscientious difficulty about the date and authorship of any book of Scripture, while he does not promulgate his difficulty in an injurious manner.

Many eminent names were attached to the Reasons of Dissent from my motion. It is reasonable, therefore, to mention some of the persons who voted with me, and who adhere decidedly to the ground which I took up. Not forgetting Dr. Begg, Dr. Thomas Smith, Dr. H. Bonar, and others usually opposed to Dr. Rainy upon questions of a different kind, but referring specially to ministers and elders who most frequently concur with the Principal, I may say that I was supported by Dr. Wilson, Dr. Goold, Professor Duns; Mr. Gibson, of Perth; Mr. Howie, of Glasgow; Mr. Inglis, of Dundee; Mr. Kelman, of Leith; Mr. George Macauley, of Edinburgh; Dr. McLauchlan, of Edinburgh; Mr. Milroy, of Penpont; Mr. Smith, of Sanquhar; Mr. Nicoll, of

Glasgow ; Mr. George Philip, of Edinburgh ; Mr. Rankine, of Strathaven ; Mr. Riddell, of Glasgow ; Mr. Smith, of Tarland ; Mr. James Wilson, of the Barclay Church, Edinburgh ; and Mr. Wood, of Elie, *Ministers* ; and by Mr. Thomas McMicking, of Helensburg ; Mr. John Muir, of Glasgow ; Mr. John R. Millar, Glasgow ; Major Ross, of Aberdeen ; Mr. James Sime, Edinburgh ; Mr. John Chalmers, Edinburgh ; Professor Simpson, Edinburgh ; Mr. John Maclaren, Edinburgh ; Sheriff Hugh Cowan, Mr. David Dickson, Edinburgh ; Mr. William Dickson, Edinburgh ; Mr. Daniel Fraser, Glasgow ; Mr. James McLure, Glasgow ; and Mr. John Macdonald, Edinburgh, *Elders*. I am further allowed to mention that Mr. Burns, of Kirkliston ; Mr. Walker, of Dysart ; and Colonel Young, though for special reasons they did not vote at all, are cordially with me in the substance of my judgment. I am also authorised to say that Mr. David Maclagan, Edinburgh, whose name is so well known to your readers, though declining this year to be a member of Assembly from finding it impracticable to be in Glasgow during the sittings, has formed a very decided opinion in favour of my motion and against the Reasons of Dissent. These are but a few specimens of the very large support that is tendered to me.*

* In a letter from the Rev. Dr. Elder, of Rothesay, he intimated his adherence to my view in strong terms.

VI.

DR. RAINY.—THE ASSEMBLY VOTE.—NO REACTION.—COLLEGE REPORT.—PUBLICATION OF FIRST ANSWER TO THE LIBEL.—NEW THEORY OF INSPIRATION.—MR. SMITH'S EXPLANATION.—DR. CANDLISH.—THE CONFESSION.

BY REV. NORMAN L. WALKER, DYSART.

NO one who has not been intimately acquainted with the history of the Free Church during the last ten years can form any adequate idea of the pain which it gives some of us to appear in any way in opposition to Dr. Rainy. All the world knows his ability as a leader, but only those who have seen him in private counsel can fully realise how single-eyed he is, how simple and unaffectedly he seeks the glory of God in the good of his Church, and how absolutely free he is of all self-seeking and personal ambition! He has been a leader of the generous Disruption type, and very much, I believe, on that account he was followed during all the Union controversy with a heartiness and loyalty which could hardly be exceeded.

I refer to this in connection with a strange misapprehension which I find existing as to the conclusion to be drawn from the vote in last Assembly. Many who ought to know better have spoken as if Sir Henry Moncreiff had secured more support than he would probably otherwise have got in consequence of his having constructed a singularly cunning and attractive motion. I am just as certain of this as I can be of anything that Sir Henry lost a considerable number of votes by putting into his motion more than was needful. What gained for him the majority was simply this, that he represented substantially the mind of the Assembly on the point at issue. That he carried his motion at all—carried it *weighty* as it was—and carried it against the opposition, the

speech, and *the Protest* of Dr. Rainy, was indeed "a moral victory;" but it was a moral victory of a very different sort from that which has been claimed. In itself my own opinion is of course of very little moment, but it is not irrelevant in this connection to say that I was one of a number who did not vote at all, and that I was influenced in this abstention, first, by dissatisfaction with not the substance but the construction of Sir Henry's motion, and, secondly, by my feelings of loyalty towards my natural leader, Dr. Rainy.

I am glad to take the opportunity offered here of stating my own feelings in regard to the case of Professor Smith; but before doing so I would venture to say a word in vindication of those who have now resolved to speak out their minds with kindly frankness. I have met with some who seemed inclined to characterise all who said a word against Professor Smith as guilty of persecution. They claim for him and his friends an absolute right to say whatever *they* please, but they are shocked when the corresponding right has been exercised to express disapprobation on the other side. I do not believe that Professor Smith himself can sympathise with this one-legged toleration. He has, on his own responsibility, and under the pressure doubtless of conscientious convictions, given currency to views which run counter to our most venerable traditions, and he is too magnanimous to feel even a moment's personal irritation against those who, equally under the influence of their consciences, are candid enough to say what they think of his views and of his manner of propagating them. But apart from that, the necessity for plain speaking is being impressed upon us with painful intensity. I have seen it again and again stated that those only have no sympathy with the new movement who are more or less remotely under the influence of ecclesiastical Toryism and Dr. Begg! Well, I may without presumption say that I know something of the ministry and eldership of the Free Church. I have had a good deal of intercourse in my time with the men who have been most zealous for Union and for Disestablishment, and I can testify in the most direct way to this fact, that those who have taken counsel to state their opinions in these columns consist just of the very kind of men with whom Dr. Robert Buchanan was wont to confer in times of perplexity. It is here indeed that we feel this new trouble so grievously. The

Aberdeen Case has driven a wedge into the Free Church which has cut deeper than the Union controversy. And under these circumstances it would be folly to be silent any longer.

Like most other loyal men in the Church, I accepted the Report of the College Committee. We had confidence in its Convener — one of the wisest men remaining to us, Mr. Laughton, of Greenock—and in the leading members of the committee; and when they advised us that although there was a good deal to condemn in Professor Smith's teaching, there was nothing in it to necessitate an action for heresy, we were satisfied to acquiesce. As a corollary to that conclusion, I was prepared to assent to a motion, which was constructed but never proposed, in the Assembly of 1877, to the effect that Mr. Smith be then sent back to his Chair with a rebuke and with the expression of a generous hope that in future he would be more careful of the susceptibilities of his brethren.

We all know what followed the Assembly of 1877. Professor Smith continued his contributions to the "Encyclopædia," taking very much the same line as before. His trial at Aberdeen led to elaborate defences being offered in his favour and to his acquittal on all the charges. And still the stone continued to roll, until some leading elders felt the spell of the new movement, and, from being strong opponents of Professor Smith in the College Committee, became his partisans. Under circumstances like these, it is not surprising that some of us simple-minded country brethren became seriously perplexed. Could it indeed be the case that we had after all been concerning ourselves about the matter quite needlessly? Was it really true that Professor Smith had not only done nothing amiss, but had been doing what was fitted to add fresh glory to the Free Church and to promote more effectively the interests of true religion? I can honestly say for myself that I was open to conviction. And when at last the first *Answer to the Libel* was published, I at once procured it, and studied it with a carefulness becoming the occasion.

And it was then that I was thoroughly aroused to a sense of the seriousness of the issue that was being raised.

Hitherto I had regarded the Aberdeen movement as one which concerned in a direct way only the subject of Biblical

Introduction. I knew of course what revolutionary views might be taught even in that connection, and also that in the discussion of it, questions might be raised as to the very nature of Revelation. But formally the matter debated had been chiefly that of the history and authorship and composition of the Books of the Bible, and the world had not been made to realise that Professor Smith had any particular view of Inspiration.

In the first Answer to the Libel, however, a theory of Inspiration was distinctly developed, and that theory seemed to me to be one which, although suiting a free-handed critic exceedingly well, was fitted to present to the Scottish people another Bible than they have been reading since the Reformation. What Professor Smith appeared to teach was this, that Holy Scripture is divisible into two indefinable portions, the one being "the Record," the other "the Divine Communication of God's heart and will which the Record conveys," and that the Witness of the Spirit, and therefore the infallible truth and Divine authority of Scripture, only extend to that knowledge of God and of His will *which is necessary to salvation*; or, in other words, "infallible truth and Divine authority" cannot be ascribed to any expression in Scripture which touches neither faith nor life.

I felt that here was something which struck deeper than any question of Introduction. The Church might come to doubt the Mosaic authorship of Deuteronomy and be conceivably not any the worse for it; but if a theory of Inspiration were to come into common use, which allows a man to say; *this is Scripture, but it is not infallibly true or divinely authoritative*—I could imagine a most serious state of matters to be produced; and with this feeling in my mind I went to Glasgow.

Well, but there, I may be told, Professor Smith made a speech in which there was a triumphant vindication of his orthodoxy. He did make a speech upon the subject, a very able and remarkable speech, and I have not the slightest hesitation in saying that if he had never said a word elsewhere about Inspiration, nobody who heard him speak from the Bar would have ever dreamt for a moment of questioning his soundness. But as it was, the speech simply perplexed me. He did not withdraw his teaching in the *Answer*. He did

not show wherein his statements at the Bar were reconcilable with those already in print. And I could not help asking myself as he proceeded if he was really using his words in the two places in the same sense.

I admit, of course, that he may turn round upon me and accuse me of stupidity. He was bound to give us arguments, but he was not bound to find us understandings to take them in. But I would not be altogether defenceless under such a charge. It is to me a significant circumstance that I find everybody around me putting upon *the Answer to the Libel* the very same interpretation as I do, and not only so—this a fact to which I can directly testify, *that the disciples of Professor Smith are not themselves all able to make the distinctions which he does*. They take his theory in its rough-and-ready form, and argue, without any circumlocution, that such or such a portion of Scripture is not of infallible authority, because it was within the competency of the unaided human mind to produce it. So great a master of language as Professor Smith could not have expressed himself so as to be interpreted in a certain way by friend and foe alike if he had meant himself to be understood quite differently.

But I may be reminded that the *Answer* was itself appealed to so as containing a recognition of the Divine authority of the sacred Scriptures. There was, for example, a passage to which Professor Candlish called the attention of Sir Henry Moncreiff while he was speaking, and which he was exceedingly anxious should be read. Sir Henry did not read the passage, not because he was not willing to do so, for, as all will admit, he is candour itself, but because he was not aware at the time of the importance which was attached to it. But all who had the papers at the moment in their hands did of course read it, and I am pretty sure that it produced conviction only in the minds of those who were already convinced. The passage stated in substance that if a man goes to the Bible in a spiritual state of mind he will find Divine and authoritative truth in every part of it. That was presented as conveying the impression that Professor Smith held the doctrine of plenary inspiration, as it is commonly understood. If that were the case, what could be the meaning of the distinctions introduced elsewhere? Were those distinctions to be interpreted in the light of this passage, or was the passage

to be read in the light of the distinctions? I for my own part have no doubt at all that the latter was the course intended to be followed. And in that view I would, if I had the opportunity, put such questions as these—Is there not Divine truth in every part of Scripture whether it is “found” or no? Is it only the spiritual man who will find Divine authority in Scripture? Will not the spiritual man find Divine truth in every part of—a tree?

Professor Smith asserts that the views he holds on this subject are those of the Confession and of the Confessional theologians. I do not presume to contradict him in my own name. But there is still at least one man among us whose acquaintance with the theological literature of the Confessional period is second to none; and although I am not permitted to mention his name, I think it is due to the interests of truth to say that on that point he considers Professor Smith’s assumptions to be so entirely unwarranted, that their having been put forward at all by him has shaken his confidence in the critical ability of Mr. Smith, even in all other connections.

VII.

THE PRACTICAL QUESTION.—SPIRIT IN WHICH BIBLICAL PROBLEMS SHOULD BE DISCUSSED. — PROFESSOR SMITH'S DEFECTS.—WHAT HIS RESTORATION WILL IMPLY. — RECOGNISED UNCERTAINTY OF HIS POSITIONS. — DANGER TO THE FREE CHURCH. — MISGIVINGS OF ITS FRIENDS.—REJOICINGS OF ITS ENEMIES.—THE *EXAMINER* AND THE *THEOLOGICAL REVIEW*.—OUR CHURCH'S HERITAGE.—DR. LINDSAY.

BY REV. NORMAN L. WALKER.

I HAVE stated that I am not satisfied that Professor Smith's view of the Bible as a divinely authoritative Revelation, is either sound or safe.

But apart from that there can be no doubt that the question practically before the Church is this, "*After all that has happened, would it be wise and prudent to recommit to Professor Smith the important charge of the upbringing of our future ministry?*" I am quite aware of the delicacy of the question, but as Dr. Rainy said at the Assembly, we are at last taking up our respective responsibilities, and it is only fair that it should be known that there are not a few, whose loyalty to the Church and to those liberal principles which it has of recent years been professing cannot be questioned, who are strongly of opinion that that question must be answered in the negative.

The question is one which is not settled when you have decided in the abstract that Biblical criticism ought in a Free Church to have elbow-room. Nor is there even an end of all debate when you have determined how far a private member of the Church, or even a minister, may be allowed to go without challenge in his investigations. There is something additional involved, something vital to the proper administration of the Church, in the inquiry of how far you are justified

in having at the very fountain-head of your system one in whom entire confidence is not placed.

1. While many Biblical problems are in these days pressing for solution, and that so urgently, that no Church can afford to overlook them, it is of vital moment to the peace of individual Churches that such critics as undertake to speak for them should do so as far as possible in harmony with their spirit. I do not say that they should shock no prejudices and stir up no opposition, for nobody can move forward in any direction without awakening the indignation of some one who wants to stay behind. What I mean is this, that if a scholar wishes to retain the confidence of his Church in connection with any new views, and especially if he is to carry that Church along with him, he must show that he is not under influences external to it which are moving him to take up positions of antagonism with suspicious speed. Now, without discussing the question of whether Professor Smith is right or not in his views, I hold it to be demonstrable that he is not the kind of critic into whose hands the Free Church could with an utter confidence entrust the fighting of its battles on the field of Biblical Introduction.

(1.) Professor Smith has more than once said that if he had only guessed how ill the Church would have taken his manner of writing, he would have been more careful in the construction of his articles. It is greatly to his credit that he has intimated as much. But the wonderful thing is this, that it should not have occurred to him at the outset that the paper "Bible," in the "Encyclopædia," could not possibly appear without wounding the susceptibilities of his communion. The defect of *savoir faire* thus displayed is so extraordinary that if Professor Smith were to have recommitted to him by the General Assembly its interest in Biblical Criticism, the Free Church could never be free from anxiety as to his methods of defence in the future. In perfect good faith, he might at any moment speak in ways which, however well fitted to serve literary purposes, would needlessly disturb the peace of the denomination to which he belongs.

(2.) But, further, it is inconceivable that the course of a critic should be followed without some misgiving *who has already taken up an advanced position on almost all the debatable questions*. I read some time ago a pamphlet the

argument of which was substantially this—Here is a doctrine which is not regarded as a strictly orthodox one, but such a person taught it, and yet he was tolerated. It was the same with such another individual! He taught so and so, and yet his offence was condoned. Why, then, when open questions are so willingly allowed, make any difficulty about Professor Smith? The answer is easy. John Wesley was a Perfectionist, Mr. Spurgeon is a Baptist, Mr. Ryle is an Erastian. Nevertheless, we all regard these men as perfectly sober-minded, trustworthy Christians. Why? Because they have kept in the main to the old paths, and their divergences are looked at as possible eccentricities. But show us a man who is at once a Perfectionist, a Baptist, and an Erastian, and it will not be easy not to stand somewhat in doubt of him as one whose mind is, perhaps, *too* open to conviction to be altogether reliable. And it is just so in the present case. I do not say that Professor Smith cannot be right in all his views, but I do say that no man ought to feel any surprise if a conservative body like the Free Church should hesitate about a fresh commendation to the world as its representative critic of one who has not merely moved forward at one point, but has, as has been said, advanced with a startling boldness along the whole line.

If we are to nourish a school of criticism, pledging our credit for it, giving to it our material support, we are entitled to expect that it shall exhibit in its own place and way something of our *esprit de corps*. In other words, it must be *reverent* in the manner of its criticism and *cautious and conservative* in its method of advance. And with all my admiration for Professor Smith I fear that he does not possess those qualities which are necessary to secure for him the full confidence of such a Church as ours in a time like the present.

2. There is another thing to be considered. If the case ends in the re-imposition of Mr. Smith in his Chair, that act will be regarded by the world as more than a vote of confidence in himself personally. *It will be interpreted as a triumph for the views he has promulgated.* I am aware that many of those who support him say that they are not to be held as agreeing with his views. Some of them, indeed, go a great way further, and affirm emphatically that they differ

from him, and are always likely to differ from him. Others are more modest. They are like the old woman who took a friend to hear her minister preach one Sunday. The minister was one of those able men who are so profound that they are understood only by a favoured few. When the two worshippers left the church together, the following conversation occurred :—

“ Well, how did ye like him ? ”

“ Like him ? ” said the stranger. “ Oh, I thoct I liket him gey weel. But *I didna understand him. Did you ?* ”

“ *Me !* ” exclaimed the regular hearer. *Wad I hae the presumption ?* ”

It is this humble and self-denied position which certain even of our leading men have taken up. They say, we don't know what may be the truth ; but Professor Smith knows, or will come to know ! And the wisest plan for the Church to adopt is to give him liberty enough, and he will bring us all out into the light by-and-by !!

Now, I say nothing of the absurdity of this position in itself, or of the use which the Papists might fairly make of it. But I may point out that this blind confidence in criticism is only possible to those few who are intimate friends of the critic, and who have, as they think, cause to have an utter confidence in him. It is out of the question to suppose that a whole Church should ever agree to abnegate its functions, and leave the determination of its articles of belief to one so far unknown man.

However, what I was saying was this, that, whether we mean it or not, the world will understand that in recognising Professor Smith we are more or less expressly putting our *imprimatur* on his opinions. You think it will be enough to guard against such an inference to say that you personally dissent from these opinions, or that your mind is in a state of suspense about them. But the great unreflecting public is not given to make nice distinctions. What it will see will be this, the Free Church taking a scholar who teaches in effect that the Bible is about the most sophisticated book in existence, and replacing him in a position where he will be *authoritatively empowered* to indoctrinate the youth of the communion with the views he has adopted, and it will judge and act accordingly.

Now I do not know that any number of persons in the Free Church have as yet come to be so assured of the truth of Professor Smith's positions as to wish to secure for them such conspicuous sanction. I hope we shall all be willing to believe anything whatever upon sufficient evidence. But I may remind you that we are as yet a long way off from the point of being compelled to recognise Mr. Smith as what some of his friends have flatteringly called him, a "*Second Galileo*."

In the first place, his positions are not of a kind to admit of demonstration. Anybody who denies the diurnal revolution of the earth can be *proved* to be a fool or an ignoramus. But the critics can never, in the nature of things, make their points so clear as to be entitled to dogmatise. To the end of time it will continue to be a question of probabilities, and some of the most important points will be determined one way or another according to the degree of the veneration which men have for the book which we call the Bible. If that volume sinks to the level which it has reached under Unitarianism nothing will be easier than to convince those who read it that it is full of cunning Oriental devices. But if it holds the place it has hitherto done in Scotland, the critics will find that a very elaborate array of arguments will be required to convince the Christian people that its construction is the reverse of simple, and that Sir Walter Scott was largely anticipated there in those innocent impositions which he practised in his "*Chronicles of the Canongate*."

But, secondly, this has to be borne in mind also, that on the great questions in connection with which Professor Smith has taken up advanced positions, there has not even been secured a *consensus* of the critics. I do not say that I would have been satisfied to take the law at their lips, even had they been unanimous. We are often told that the highest science has pronounced in favour of Evolution, and yet we, ignorant people though we are, contrive to maintain our faith in Creation notwithstanding. And our faith has roots which would not be touched although all the critics in the world were agreed that Moses never heard of Deuteronomy and John never wrote the Gospel that bears his name. But it is assuring to know that there are just as competent men as Professor Smith who have gone over all the ground which

he has traversed, and who have come back to the old paths with their old beliefs unshaken.* This fact clearly shows that it is not mere ignorance which keeps us as we are. And in these circumstances we object most seriously to our Church being even apparently committed to the approval of views from the general adoption of which much evil might conceivably come, and regarding which there is nothing even like critical certainty.

3. One other consideration must be soberly weighed, and it is this, that if the Free Church acquires among its neighbours the reputation of being as "liberal" as Professor Smith, it will no doubt come to be regarded with a new interest by some who have hitherto looked askance at it, but *it will certainly cease at the same time to fill the place of peculiar influence which it has heretofore held in the country and in the world.*

I do not know what some think will be the effects produced in that good time to which they are looking forward on the simple-minded Christian people of Scotland when our ministers shall feel compelled to tell their congregations that the Bible is a very much more artificial book than their fathers ever dreamt it to be; that in particular it contains nobody knows how many romances which were deliberately palmed off as histories; and that a very great deal of what has been piously supposed to refer to Christ has no more connection with Him than the Thames has with Moscow. They may fancy that our national religion will easily stand the shock; but for myself I doubt it much. If what they say is true; if Deuteronomy was really written seven centuries after the date at which it pretends to be written; if Ecclesiastes is a fiction cunningly composed by some Chatterton of the post exile period to impose upon his contemporaries for their good; if Jonah is a legend, and Canticles nothing more than a love poem, and the latter half of Isaiah was the work of an anonymous author far greater than the great Prophet himself, we must trust a good

* Principal Douglas, our Glasgow Professor of Hebrew, has, for example, published a pamphlet in which he gives his reasons for believing that our Aberdeen Professor of Hebrew is all wrong about Moses.

God to preserve an unsophisticated community in the simplicity of its faith. But since criticism cannot prove its position, since the critics are still at war among themselves, I wish that it had been some other Church than our own that set the unsettling theories afloat; and I hope that our Church will show a wiser ambition than to keep the flag flying which symbolises the doubtful liberality which it is now the fashion to boast of.

When I was editing *The Presbyterian* in the heat of the Union conflict, I used frequently to boast that our Church had, in the position which it then took up, the cordial sympathy of all the outlying members of the Presbyterian family. The English, Irish, and American Churches were all bidding us God-speed. I hope, however, that those who think they are doing the Free Church good service by encouraging the advanced school of criticism will take note of the ominous circumstance that they are *thus contributing to separate it in spirit from all its sisters*. It is significant that it is through an English Presbyterian newspaper that those who agree with Sir Henry Moncreiff are seeking to reach their brethren in Scotland. I have the best reasons for believing that Professor Smith has scarcely any followers or sympathisers in Ireland. And if his views find any echo in America *it is not from within the bosom of any of the Presbyterian Churches there*.

There are people, however, who have hailed with acclamation the signs of a growing "breadth" in the Free Church. Some of the representatives of the Broad School in the Scottish Establishment were early in the field with their congratulations. So, too, with such newspapers as the *Scotsman*, the *Spectator*, and the *Christian World*. Nothing could possibly exceed the cordiality with which they have welcomed Professor Smith as a co-worker with them in the great cause of the Church's "enlightenment." But even still more significant is the language used in two other quarters, to which, as they are less generally accessible, I may make more particular reference.

I have before me at this moment two recent publications, one the *Christian Union*, of New York, the other the *Theological Review* for July. The former is edited by Mr. Henry Ward Beecher, who, as all the world knows, holds very revo-

lutionary views of the Bible. The latter is the organ of the English Unitarians.

In the *Christian Union* the proceedings of our Assembly are commented upon as follows:—

“In a published article in the ‘Encyclopedia Britannica,’ Professor Smith takes the ground that Deuteronomy was written during the captivity by an anonymous but inspired writer, who took the name of Moses to give his work greater dramatic effect. The weakness of this attempt to reconcile the old theories of plenary inspiration with the latest results of critical scholarship was evidently felt by Professor Smith’s defenders, who based their defence not on the soundness of his position, but on the more general ground that the Confession of Faith allows a larger latitude of criticism and interpretation, so long as any theory of Divine inspiration is maintained. The view of Professor Robertson Smith was declared to be unsatisfactory by the small majority of 23; and it was unmistakable that the young men of the Church were all, or nearly all, with Professor Smith. Indeed he received at the close of the debate something very like an ovation from the galleries, which were largely occupied by theological students.

“Whether this action will lead to Professor Smith’s withdrawal from the Church remains to be seen. We judge not; certainly it does not compel him to withdraw. Meanwhile it is worth while to note the views on the subject of inspiration maintained by the younger, more liberal, and growing feeling of the Scottish Free Church. These are indicated by the majority of 143 which negatived a resolution of censure against Professor Smith, which was couched in the following terms:—

“‘That the Assembly sustain the dissent and complaint, and reverse the judgment of the Presbytery, to the extent of finding that the statement of Professor Smith, that an inspired writer allowed himself the same freedom as was taken by ancient historians, is, in the sense in which it appears to the General Assembly to be used by him, so incorrect and extreme as to be incompatible with the inspiration and infallible truth of the sacred Scriptures.’

“It would perhaps be hardly fair to conclude that the majority of the General Assembly held that the uninspired writers generally allowed themselves the same freedom as was taken by uninspired historians, though this is the plain implication of their action. But the protest presented by Principal Rainy, and signed by a large number of the minority, we may fairly cite as an indication of the tendency of religious thought in Scotland.”

“Apparently,” concludes the article, “in the on-coming discussion respecting the Inspiration of the Scriptures, which is inevitable, and which we are prepared to welcome, the Free Church of Scotland will be an honoured leader.”

“Laudari viro laudato” is a thing to boast of, but I confess I read with something of a pang the ominous compliments thus paid to our Church by Mr. Beecher.

But the Unitarians of England look with no less pleasure upon our position and prospects. Their organ, the *Theological Review*, understands Professor Smith's teaching on Inspiration just as the *Christian Union* understood it.

"Infallible truth and Divine authority [so the *Review* interprets his meaning] which are proved by the witness of the Spirit, belong to the Bible only in so far as it is a record of spiritual truth, of God's revelation of Himself and His will. The word of God is *contained* in the Scriptures. The two things are not co-extensive, and the Bible is not infallible or authoritative on matters which are not of faith. Its historical accuracy and all the literary and critical questions about its form, are to be decided by the ordinary method of evidence. In acquitting Professor Smith on this charge by a majority of 263 to 140 the Assembly has perhaps not fully adopted the sweeping theory which he advanced in his defence. But it was referred to in the discussion and must have influenced the voting. . . . Here we must leave this interesting case. Its lengthened debates and even the formal documents have been read by hundreds and thousands. All over Scotland it is felt that a new impulse has been given to liberal ideas. The opportunity is a great one for the Free Church, for when this controversy is settled in favour of liberty, she will appeal strongly to the really cultivated classes, and the character of her clergy will be permanently raised. *Professor Smith is entitled to the thanks of his country.*"

A member of Parliament said lately that nothing startled him so thoroughly, or made him more doubtful about the rightness of a certain course he was pursuing, than the fact that his speech was listened to in absolute silence by his friends, and was received with noisy demonstrations of satisfaction by his political opponents. I hope the Free Church will mark and reflect upon the ominous circumstances I have now given illustrations of—that its own kith and kin in England, Ireland, and America are looking on with misgiving and anxiety, while the movement led by Professor Smith is being hailed with joy by Unitarians and Latitudinarians.

Even were the drift of things less plainly testified to, it would argue great inconsideration on our part if we were to assent to a complete change of front in our Church without much more seriously calculating the consequences. Every Church has its idiosyncrasy, its distinctive characteristics, and a good deal of its strength and effectiveness lies in its being true to itself. You would not make Mr. Spurgeon more

useful by getting him to become a University man, and so qualifying him to address (say) the Benchers of Lincoln's Inn. The Wesleyans would not serve their ends as a Christian denomination any better by becoming as staid and respectable and dignified as the Church of England. And I feel inwardly persuaded that it will soon appear that the mission of the Free Church of Scotland has ended if it develops into a body whose distinctive features shall be "Culture" and "Liberality." Our typical Free Churchman is Chalmers—a man with his mind open to receive new light from any quarter, and deeply interested in scientific inquiry and Biblical research, but, above all, practical, philanthropic, full of sound sense and wisdom, and impatient of everything which threatened profitless discussion to the possible injury of the great cause of the conversion of the world. It is not to speak disparagingly of "culture" to say that we would make a very doubtful gain if we ceased in our humble way to follow the lead of Chalmers, and became chiefly distinguished in the world by that kind of intelligence which, for want of a better word, may be called "Encyclopædism." We might, indeed, thus raise, as the *Theological Review* points out, the character of our ministry, and attract "*the really cultivated classes.*" But the chances are that we would at the same time become emasculated as a working Church, and become about as practically useless among the masses at home and abroad as the Unitarians themselves.

When I think of the almost certain effects of the new movement if it succeeds, I confess I am greatly surprised at the attitude assumed towards it by individuals who have hitherto been prominent in their support of revivals, and I would have been even more astonished if I had not known that something of the contrariety we now witness has been long known in Germany. Tholuck, for example, was at once a Pietist and a Rationalist. But I heartily hope that some of those to whom I now refer will have their eyes opened. The practical question at issue at present is really this: Are we prepared to have the Bible occupying in Scotland a position essentially different from that which it has held there since the Reformation? Hitherto the free critical apparatus has been applied only to the Old Testament, but the New Testament must be taken up next. And it is well to be warned

beforehand that in the opinion of competent scholars the very same arguments which have been applied to Deuteronomy may soon destroy for us the historical character of St. John's Gospel.

But we are told we must take heed what we do. There are some who will leave the Church if Professor Smith is not upheld. But, alas! I can reply that I have heard threats of a similar kind made on the other side by men who have done immensely more for the establishment of the Kingdom of God in the world. And that is what aggravates me. I am not anxious that Professor Smith should be proved a heretic. I shall be very sorry indeed if he is compelled to leave the Church. But I would ask what great service has he rendered to us that we should allow him to divide us again into two hostile camps? I know he has suggested many doubts which did not exist before. I am unaware of his having conclusively settled any which were previously prevalent. And it is rather a barren compensation to offer at the sword's point to a distracted Church the counter boon merely of a great literary reputation.

It is said, however, that the galleries were in his favour, and that he is the hero of our young men. But I venture to think it possible that the value of that testimony may be overestimated. It is certain, for one thing, that a fair proportion of those who so vehemently applauded had no real conception of what is at stake. Besides, it is the natural thing for young men to take the advanced side on every question. Who among them does not want to be thought "cultured?" When the time comes for the agitation in favour of organs and a liturgy, you will hear the galleries equally enthusiastic on the side of "progress."

The occasion is one which requires our gravest and most moderate and most thoughtful men to speak out. I feel that it is something like presumption in me to write such a paper as this. I unaffectedly wish that some older man—some Disruption minister—had undertaken to express the feelings which I know are in many hearts. But events are hastening on, and as no one else seemed inclined to say in what light he viewed the crisis, I have felt constrained to break the silence. It has happened to me to have been led in more ways than one to study what I may call the philosophy of the

history of the Free Church. During the Union controversy I wrote perhaps more than any other man in the defence and exposition of the movement which was then in progress, and I was most thoroughly persuaded that it was in entirest harmony with the principles of the true and historical Church of Scotland. When the Patronage Act again was passed, I published a little book, "Our Church Heritage," in which the historical relation of the Free Church to the Establishment was attempted to be shown. And more recently I have been led over the same ground once more in connection with the life of Dr. Robert Buchanan. I make these personal references by way of apology for myself. Years of thought and study have profoundly convinced me that the Free Church has a "heritage" which it cannot lose with impunity. What is now threatened is the loss of a portion of that heritage. One great source of its influence in the world is the maintenance of its reputation for orthodoxy. If that goes, as the enemies who are watching outside plainly expect it to go, the blank will not be made up by the compensating distinction of its becoming "the honoured leader" of an advanced school of criticism. The train will then be shunted on to an entirely different line, and the destination of our Church will be—first dissolution, and next the absorption of probably its largest section into a Moderate and comprehensionist Establishment.

POSTSCRIPT.

Since writing the above, I have read Professor Lindsay's article in the *Contemporary Review*. If I had any misgivings before as to the wisdom of sending these "communications" to the press, they have been entirely removed by the perusal of that paper. It is exceedingly to be regretted that the Professors are taking so much to do with the Aberdeen case. By creating the impression that they are banding together to make a common cause of it, they are running the risk of shaking the confidence of the Church in its colleges altogether. If, however, our Professors do feel constrained in conscience to interfere, they ought to consider much more seriously than I fear Dr. Lindsay has done what is the best method of doing so.

1. For example, the main issue, in his judgment, is a very simple one. It is "whether it is possible to be equally loyal to criticism and dogma?" Is that a true statement of the case? Have we to do only with the settlement of an abstract proposition? If anyone were to ask me whether it is possible to be equally loyal "to criticism and to dogma," I would feel utterly unable to answer. I don't know, any more

than I know whether it is possible to be "equally loyal" to science and to revelation. What we have really to do with is *Professor Smith's Criticism* and the *Dogma of the Free Church*, and while I feel quite assured that true criticism and true doctrine will always agree just as I am certain that true science and revelation will agree, I have no certain guarantee that either Professor Smith or Professor Lindsay will infallibly reach absolutely sound positions both as to doctrine and criticism, if only they are allowed rope enough.

2. Dr. Lindsay, again, coolly assumes that those who failed to appreciate Mr. Smith's articles, "Bible," were such as had "settled on their lees in Sion"! Nay, he is even more explicit ere he closes. The opponents of the new movement are "Pharisees"—Pharisees, too, of the worst class, for in this matter they have the Sadducees as their associates. Such language is not likely to promote the peace of the Free Church.

3. A thoroughly unsuccessful attempt is made to show that there is no doctrinal difference between the Church and Mr. Smith on the subject of Inspiration. The *Christian World*, one of Professor Smith's most earnest supporters in the public press, is not deceived by the dust he raises. "It is not without disappointment," it says, "that we observe Professor Lindsay's anxiety to make out that Professor Smith and the party supporting him in the Free Church have not deviated from the old arbitrary theory of Inspiration. *The question in dispute has not been one about words, but about something far deeper than words.*"

4. Dr. Lindsay tries to turn into ridicule the remark made by someone that a Free Church Critical School ought to be "reverent and conservative." To him this demand means nothing but that the School must hold opinions like those of the utterer of the remark! It is rather sad to think that terms like these have no meaning for those who have so much in their power to secure that the Holy Scriptures shall be venerated or the reverse.

Altógether, those who read the *Contemporary* should be informed that Professor Lindsay has written a merely partisan article, and that those who do not happen to agree with his conclusions neither admire its spirit nor accept it as a fair statement of the "Critical Movement in the Scotch Free Church."

VIII.

BY REV. WALTER WOOD, ELIE.

I have been greatly interested in reading Mr. Walker's communications in the two last numbers of the *Weekly Review*, and I am tempted to ask for the insertion of a few remarks from a different point of view, for I supported *both* the motions that were carried in the Assembly. It may seem indeed a somewhat strange thing that so many men are hurrying forward to explain or defend the motions for which they voted, but the truth is we are placed in a very peculiar position. Honestly believing that a right decision on the matters before the Assembly was of the greatest importance for the character of the Free Church, we have been doing our best to procure such a decision; and now we find the judgment of the Assembly assailed as incompetent and as unfair to the party at the bar. It is easy to conceive how Sir Henry Moncreiff especially, whose name has been associated among us with everything that is fair, and honourable, and judicially impartial, should have resented the imputation that he had framed his motion to catch votes, and that in so framing it he had condemned the accused party on a point on which he had not had an opportunity of being heard in his own defence. Of course the charge made against Sir Henry was unwarranted, as he has himself proved. But those who voted along with him are bound to assist in repelling it.

For myself, I have belonged to no committee that had anything to do with Professor Smith's case, and I came up to the Glasgow Assembly having had no consultations with anyone, and entirely ignorant of what course the matter was likely to take. I had, however, taken great interest in the case from the beginning, for such inquiries as those to which Professor Smith has given his attention have for me a

peculiar charm ; and for forty years back and more I have lost no opportunity of studying all works on this subject which have come in my way. Sometimes I have smiled at the extravagant claims which the votaries of the higher criticism assert for their “new science of history, with its new methods and unexpected results,” but on the whole I have always been inclined to give to all such inquirers the widest possible range consistent with a due regard to “fundamentals.”

Like many others, I would have preferred that this case should have been settled without a *libel* ; but regrets on this subject are vain. Professor Smith demanded a libel, and he was entitled to do so. After seeing the libel as first drawn, I came to be of opinion that it was far too complex, and contained too many particulars, to permit of the great questions at issue being satisfactorily settled by means of it. I did not blame the Presbytery for so drawing the libel, for I did not see how, in the circumstances, they could have acted otherwise ; but I went up to the General Assembly at Glasgow very much persuaded that under the first charge of the libel—that of “publishing and promulgating opinions which contradict or are opposed to the doctrine of the immediate inspiration, infallible truth, and Divine authority of the Holy Scriptures”—it would have been better if instead of *eight* there had been only *one* particular included ; and that one the *second*, embodying the charge concerning the Book of Deuteronomy.

Just as I entered the Assembly Hall for the first time the Smith case was called. The question which first came up was the relevancy of the first particular, charging Professor Smith with promulgating the opinion that the Aaronic priesthood was not divinely instituted in the time of Moses ; and it was quite in accordance with the opinions which I had formed that that charge should be dropped from the libel. Then we had the pleadings from the bar on the second charge—the one regarding Deuteronomy—and notices of motion for next day were given by Sir Henry Moncreiff and by Principal Rainy, the former of whom I was at that time inclined to support.

Now I wish to give a short summary of the speech delivered by Sir Henry Moncreiff in support of the motion which he had given notice of, because I think it has been too

little attended to, and because the motion cannot be fully understood without it. He began by defending the language of the libel as giving a fair expression of Professor Smith's opinions. Then he went on to say that the question whether Deuteronomy was professedly historical lay at the very foundation of the case; for, till that was settled, he could not bring the Standards of the Church to bear on Professor Smith's opinions. And how did he propose to settle that question? Not by an appeal to the Confession of Faith, as Professor Lindsay intimates in his article in the number of the *Contemporary Review* for August, 1878. The Confession contains no statement on the subject, as Sir H. Moncreiff expressly acknowledged. But he proved, or attempted to prove, that Deuteronomy is professedly historical, by an appeal to the only conceivable ground of proof of such a proposition—an examination of the Book itself, and of the sanction given to it by our Lord, His apostles and evangelists.

But, said Sir Henry, the conviction that Deuteronomy is historical is not sufficient to enable us to come directly to the conclusion that Professor Smith's view is opposed to the Standards. We must therefore look more closely at the Confession of Faith, and at the first chapter of it, entitled "Of the Holy Scripture." The first section declares that it had pleased God to commit His revealed will "wholly unto writing;" whence we may safely conclude that the revelation comes to us in a safe state for our guidance. The second section enumerates the Books of Scripture, just as they were received by the Jews; and, besides, it identifies *Holy Scripture with the Word of God written*, and declares of these Books that they are all given by *inspiration of God, to be the rule of faith and life*. Passing now to the fifth section of the chapter, we find it asserted concerning Scripture that our full persuasion and assurance of the infallible truth and Divine authority thereof, is from the *inward work of the Holy Spirit, bearing witness by and with the word in our hearts*. It was at this point that Sir H. Moncreiff made allusion to Professor Smith's defences, and it was with respect to the meaning to be put on this section of the Confession. The defences appeared to allege that because it is by the inward work of the Holy Spirit that we get full assurance of the infallibility

of Scripture, therefore infallibility, as used in the Confession, could only apply to what cannot be made known to us except by the power of the Spirit. This Sir Henry denied to be the doctrine of the Confession. He referred to the previous part of the fifth section, as declaring that the entire perfection or infallibility of Scripture could be made out by clear evidence, even apart from the work of the Spirit, although the Spirit alone can make men to be individually assured of that infallibility. It will be seen, of course, that the argument rested not on any assumed sense put on Professor Smith's words, but on Sir Henry's own interpretation of the Confession of Faith.

Applying the principles laid down to the statement in question about the Book of Deuteronomy, the argument concluded thus:—Deuteronomy is presented to us by God as a historical book. If so, then according to the Confession it is a part of that which is the rule of our faith and life, and moreover it is, as part of the Word of God, infallibly true. And consequently the statement regarding it made by Professor Smith contradicts or is opposed to the Standards. Sir H. Moncreiff concluded by saying that the Assembly was not now entitled to try Professor Smith on the question of inspiration, for it would be quite wrong to libel a man for one thing, and find him guilty of another.

I have given this brief sketch from my own memory, assisted by the newspaper report, which I find to be very imperfect, chiefly for the purpose of explaining the perplexity which I felt on learning from Principal Rainy's speech that he regarded the motion as one which ought not to have been proposed; as proceeding upon an interpretation of Professor Smith's words which he repudiated, and as condemning that gentleman on a point on which he had never been heard in his defence. I was so bewildered that I even hesitated whether I should give my vote as I had intended; nor did I make up my mind until a conversation with an old and valued friend, not a member of Assembly, had satisfied me that his views of Sir H. Moncreiff's speech and mine perfectly agreed.

This is worth notice only as bearing on the question of the majority; for I emphatically endorse Mr. Walker's statement that, in the circumstances, to have carried his motion at all was for Sir Henry a great moral victory. How

many persons must have been bewildered! How many, like myself, unwilling to desert Principal Rainy, under whose banner we had rallied more often than under Sir Henry Moncreiff's! It is altogether a mistake to suppose that the majority was due to a fortuitous coalition of parties. It was rather the result of an instinctive rush to the breach to defend the great Protestant doctrine of an *infallible Word of God*. And I venture to assert that as the matter in debate comes to be better understood, the majority will increase instead of diminishing.

But it may, perhaps, be said, "You complain of Sir H. Moncreiff's speech having been ignored, and his motion misunderstood; is it likely that this should have really been the case, especially considering the character of the speakers on the other side?" Now I at once reply that it is *not* likely, and that if men had believed that it *was* likely, the majority in favour of Sir H. Moncreiff's motion would have been much larger than it was. But, likely or unlikely, it is unquestionably true that the speech *was* ignored, and the motion *was* misunderstood. And I venture to account for it in this way. As the two motions were tabled the evening before the debate took place, I imagine that the speech of Principal Rainy was in a great measure constructed before Sir H. Moncreiff's speech was delivered. Out of several facts which suggest this solution, my space will only permit me to notice one. In Sir H. Moncreiff's motion the following words occur:—"The statements of Professor Smith . . . are opposed . . . to the supposition of the book being a *thoroughly inspired historical record, according to the teaching of the Westminster Confession*." On this, Principal Rainy remarks, "Where did the Westminster Confession say so? They were asked to put into their judgment these words, while the Confession did not teach a syllable on that question." Now, as I have already shown, Sir Henry explicitly declared in his speech that *before* he could come to the Confession of Faith, at all, he must first settle the question whether the Book of Deuteronomy is professedly historical. Therefore the words of the motion must mean "a historical record thoroughly inspired, according to the teaching of the Confession." One would have thought that this meaning was sufficiently obvious from the fact that the Confession teaches

nothing about the historical character of the Book, while it does teach something about its inspiration. At all events, Sir Henry's speech should have made it clear. Yet Professor Lindsay improves upon the misconception by telling us that "the dissent practically declared that the motion which was carried . . . had postulated, on the one hand, that Deuteronomy was, according to the Confession, professedly an historical Book." There is no such declaration in the Reasons of Dissent, and if there had it would not have been true.

I have sometimes been asked, "But, then, if all that you say is true, how do you account for the fact that on the evening of the day when this vote was taken there was such a collapse of the majority, when the Assembly was called on to express its opinion on the *third* particular?" This is a question which none are better entitled to answer than Dr. Wilson and myself. For we were both of us in the ranks of the defaulters; we both supported Sir Henry's motion, and we both declined to vote for the relevancy of the third particular. Dr. Wilson distinctly stated to the house the reason which influenced him. He could not vote for the first motion because it appeared to him to limit the freedom which certainly all the authors of the sacred Scriptures had in the exercise of their mind under the superintendence of the Spirit. As for myself, I voted along with Dr. Wilson, mainly on the ground that I wished to throw out *all* the other counts of the libel under that head, and to take the issue on the question regarding Deuteronomy alone. So far from our votes betokening any change of opinion, Dr. Wilson and I would have voted on Sir Henry Moncreiff's motion the same way as we did at first, had it been a second time submitted for the judgment of the Assembly. And we may fairly suppose that we were very far from standing alone in the view we took of the question.

Professor Lindsay informs us that by the public press of the country it was held that "the second vote had knocked the bottom out of the first." I fear the wish must be father to the thought, for nothing can be more certain than that it is utterly erroneous. For the first of the two judgments found that certain statements concerning the Book of Deuteronomy were contrary to the Confession of Faith; while the second

found that certain statements regarding Chronicles and other books were not relevant to support the charge laid in the third particular of the libel. These two deliverances are perfectly consistent. No doubt, if any of the supporters of Sir Henry Moncreiff's motion came to believe that they had condemned Professor Smith for a theory of inspiration which he did not hold, they may have resolved that they would not go a step farther in that direction. But such supporters could not have been very intelligent, and must, I should think, have been very few. It has already been shown that the motion proceeded on no ground of that kind. And if, when Professor Lindsay uses the following words:—"In the evening, when his (Professor Smith's) views of inspiration were under discussion, the motion which declared him free from heresy," &c., he means to assert that Professor Smith's views of inspiration were ever formally before the Assembly, or that they were declared by the motion of that evening to be free from heresy, then I meet the statement with the most emphatic denial. Both Dr. Wilson and I voted for that motion, and I am very sure that neither of us will admit that we expressed any opinion *then*, or that we are prepared to express any opinion *now*, on Professor Smith's view of *Inspiration*. The truth is that his view appears to be one of those things which no one can understand. To me it seemed that his oral statements were not consistent with his printed defences; and if ever the Church Courts are called on to give a judicial deliverance on that point, a previous inquiry will be necessary, in order to furnish the materials for an intelligent decision.

IX.

THE VITAL IMPORTANCE OF THE DECISION ABOUT
DEUTERONOMY.

BY SIR HENRY MONCREIFF.

THIS decision was proposed by me with extreme reluctance. I took part in the case at all at great sacrifice of inclination. I was driven into my course by circumstances over which I had no control, and by the force of a growing conscientious conviction. I was anxious that the ability, scholarship, and services of Professor Smith should not be lost to the Free Church of Scotland. My appreciation of these kept me for a long time under the influence of a desire that no strong measures should be taken against him, and under the influence of a hope that, through friendly conference, the Church might have satisfied herself as to the safety of his continuance with us. But the question is not now one with reference to the personal qualities or tendencies or future position of an individual. Some of our excellent brethren in the eldership have treated it too much as if it were so. Let me entreat them and all the friends of the Church to remember that it is a much larger and more vitally-important question.

It is not even a question respecting a statement, in such a publication as an encyclopædia, of doubtful or unsound opinions held by others which have not been decidedly adhered to by the Professor himself, nor is it simply a question as to unguarded expressions from the meaning of which we may expect him to withdraw. If I could have looked upon it in either of these lights, I might have concurred in the objections to my motion adduced by Dr. Anderson Kirkwood and Mr. James Stevenson in last Assembly. It is still open to the

Professor to allege either of these grounds when the libel has been served upon him, however unlikely his doing so may appear. But the conclusion mainly contended for by his supporters was manifestly quite different.

The question really involved in their contention is whether or not our Church shall for the future allow our ministers and professors to maintain on critical grounds that such a book as Deuteronomy is not infallibly true in its apparently historical announcements, and that some of the language ascribed to Moses in it never was or could have been uttered by him, but was the production of a writer who lived at least 700 years later, and was instructed by the Spirit of God, in accordance with recognised literary forms, to employ it as if it had come from Moses. The decision of last Assembly, finding the charge about Deuteronomy relevant, amounts to a refusal of liberty to do this, because such liberty is inconsistent with the Confession of Faith. The decision tends to separate Professor Smith from his Professorship and from our ministry in the event of his continuing to maintain the opinion referred to. In the event of retractation, separation might not follow. But the vital question was not the effect upon *him*. It was whether or not liberty to maintain such an opinion shall for the future be allowed to all our professors and ministers. I trust, therefore, that what is personal in the bearing of this question on the Professor will not blind any of our ministers or elders to what concerns the binding authority of Scripture and the position of the Free Church of Scotland.

For the longer that I consider the subject the more thoroughly am I persuaded that the liberty demanded would, if allowed, cut the Bible to pieces and destroy that reverence for its authority which is fundamental to our faith. I have also an increasing impression that it would break up the integrity of our ecclesiastical fellowship, and reduce our well-compacted Church into sectional fragments. Thus my endeavours to vindicate the judgment of last Assembly have not arisen from a mere wish to defend my own action, but from what I think a well-grounded apprehension that any future departure from the principle of that judgment would entail upon us an incalculable amount of confusion and distress. The case of Professor Smith might thereby, in my view, become known as carrying with it the first approaches

of an iceberg, which will crush the Free Church vessel by its chilling weight, and upset her organisation in a miserable overthrow.

Let me not be mistaken. It is not the denial that the Book of Deuteronomy was in its present shape and in all its parts written by Moses personally that I condemn as contrary to the Confession and fraught with so much evil. Nor do I thus condemn a rejection of the particular arguments which appear to me in their accumulated force to prove the thoroughly historical character of Deuteronomy. There is a variety of lines of proof to the same effect. The judgment of last Assembly does not insist upon any one of these lines of proof. It only insists on the admission that Deuteronomy is strictly historical, and that all its historical statements are infallibly true. The liberty asked for is liberty to deny the infallible truth of some of these statements in their strictly historical character. This, and this alone, is the liberty which, in the case of Deuteronomy, I considered to be condemned by the Confession, and which I think would lead to the fearful consequences that I tremble to think of. It has been suggested that the more intelligent laymen in our Assembly saw the historical character of Deuteronomy to be not a matter of faith, but simply a matter for human investigation. I rather think that there were very intelligent laymen, as there were very intelligent ministers, who viewed the subject in an entirely different light, and regarded the Confession as asserting the infallible truth of each Book of Scripture in the character which it professedly assumes.

Undoubtedly human sagacity, guided by the Spirit of God, must judge in each case what that character is. But it has hitherto escaped the penetration of some of our otherwise very intelligent friends that the truth of an inspired Book's professed character is a prominent and essential part of its essential and infallible truthfulness. I must judge of the scope and bearing which any Scriptural announcement carries with it. But if I judge erroneously on a point of serious consequence, so as to deny the truth of what the Church I belong to regards as clearly proclaimed by the infallible voice of God, my own speciality of judgment cannot set me free to maintain and teach, as a minister or a professor of that Church, anything which contradicts in her judgment the infallible

truth of Scripture. There are few cases, indeed, in which this principle would require to be applied, except those of historical representation. For points of vital doctrine are otherwise guarded by particular statements in the Confession. But its application, where historical accuracy is concerned, is indispensable to the maintenance of the Confessional declaration on the subject of inspiration. The doctrines of Christianity are based upon the facts which inspired history records. Take away the infallible truth of these facts and you take away the foundations of faith. Our only protection against the denial of them is in holding that the Confession asserts their infallible truth in what appears to the Church their manifest character. Our Confession is not occupied with minute assertion of particular facts in Scripture history. But it throughout assumes the infallible truth of these in conformity to its declarations on inspiration in its first chapter.

The fundamental fact, however, represented in any inspired Book is its own character as a communication from God. To some people it is self-evident, and to other people it is proved by various lines of evidence, that the Book of Deuteronomy is professedly historical, and that, consequently, God presents it to us as an infallibly true history. If this conclusion be well founded, to deny its historical accuracy is to contradict the Confession of Faith. The only reply seems to be that our Confession nowhere declares that Deuteronomy is professedly historical. But the Confession nowhere declares that the Books of Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Joshua, Judges, or Ruth, are strictly historical. It does not do so with respect to the Books of Samuel, Kings, Ezra, or Nehemiah. No one of the four Gospels is thus characterised by it. The Book of Acts stands in the same position. Are we, then, to hold that it is consistent with the doctrine of the Confession to represent the narratives given in anyone of these Books as not infallibly true? Are we to allow a professor or a minister to teach that any part of the accounts relating to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, or Joseph, is erroneous. Can we permit it to be maintained that the Gospel of Luke, or part of it, or that the Gospel of John, or part of it, or that the Book of Acts, or part of it, has been ascertained to originate in a different age from that in which it claims to have appeared? If liberty be asked for the maintenance of

such views in connection with critical discoveries, how shall we refuse the request, except on the ground that because the narratives referred to are professedly historical, the infallible truth ascribed by our Confession to all the Books of Scripture would otherwise be contradicted?

Again, if anyone shall deny that the Epistle to the Romans is a book of doctrinal instruction by the Apostle Paul, or shall assert that some of the instruction apparently given by him was really inserted and represented as his by a later writer, or if anyone shall contend that a prophetic intimation in an Old Testament Book was not written until after the event, how shall we prevent such interference by a minister or professor with the integrity of the Divine Word, except by appealing to the professed character of the Book, or of the instruction, or of the intimation, and insisting on its infallible truth on the footing of the Confessional doctrine in its application to all the Books? No supporter of Professor Smith has yet shown how, if his view of Deuteronomy be permitted, the thorough infallibility of other parts of Scripture can be protected from assaults arising out of alleged discoveries made by modern criticism. It is good for our Church to encourage critical researches. But when their conclusions involve an inroad upon that doctrine of infallible truth which has come home to our conviction upon evidence that is independent of them all, we dare not allow room for such conclusions, and even when they create difficulties which we cannot solve, it is our needful wisdom simply to confess our inability, while we adhere steadfastly to what we have been taught by the voice of God in His Word, and feel assured that He will make all things clear in the end.

The question of liberty as to Deuteronomy I regard as a test question, the determination of which will have a wide application to many Books and passages of Scripture. If the significance which they bear upon their own showing is to be set aside by supposed critical discoveries, I see no limit to the havoc which such liberty might produce. The Free Church cannot long hold together or sustain her character for orthodoxy upon such a system. Orthodox and straightforward men throughout the world have concurred in condemning the theory which would make Deuteronomy the work of a later inspired prophet, who put words into the

mouth of Moses. The late Charles Kingsley condemned this idea, because good men and inspired prophets are not in the habit of telling lies, and because if any prophet of gifts so extraordinary as to originate Deuteronomy 700 years after Moses had really existed we should have heard more about him. I have recently found evangelical ministers of learning and intelligence in the Church of England starting back with abhorrence from the theory of Professor Smith, and saying that in place of obviating the charge of a pious fraud it only makes God a party to the fraud.

The Rev. Dr. Goold, well known in connection with the Reformed Presbyterian Church and its recent union with the Free Church, now for many years the secretary of the National Bible Society of Scotland, and Moderator of the Free Church Assembly in 1877, voted for my motion in last Assembly. He assured me at the time that he thoroughly concurred with me in opposition to the Reasons of Dissent, and he advised me when preparing the Answers and gave his approbation to them. I am authorised to say that his agreement with me specially embraces my argument regarding the application of the Confessional doctrine on "infallible truth" to the professed character of inspired Books, and my conception that it does not appear from any statement by Professor Smith's supporters how allowance can be given to his view of Deuteronomy without preventing us from protecting the integrity of other parts of Scripture. It is a striking circumstance that no attempt has ever been made to grapple with the Answers to the Reasons of Dissent.* These Answers are regarded as quite unanswerable by very capable judges, and it will not do to go on appealing to the Reasons of Dissent without venturing to look the Answers honestly in the face.

Let me, in conclusion, point out that to admit the legitimacy of a Free Church professor or minister maintaining the theory of Deuteronomy which our judgment has condemned, must tend to undermine any satisfactory doctrine on inspiration. I do not say that a defective view of that subject is at the root of the theory, and that the broader question is the question of inspiration. I know that some well-instructed

* The Reasons of Dissent and the Answers will be found in the Appendix.

persons think so ; but to me it appears that the relation of the one question to the other is the reverse of this opinion. I look upon an undue love of the higher criticism and an undue subjection to the attraction of its conclusions as leading men almost unconsciously to defective views of inspiration. I regard the question concerning Deuteronomy as raising the broadest issue which can come before our Church—an issue which will comprehend in it the preservation among us in its integrity of a sound judgment on inspiration. If the statements in Deuteronomy with respect to what Moses did or said are not to be considered historically accurate, because their exact accuracy cannot be reconciled with critical conclusions, then in obedience to similar conclusions our ministers and professors must be free to abandon a profession of belief in the exact accuracy of other statements in other Books. Professor Smith, indeed, may stop short in carrying out his conceptions to all their legitimate results ; but we can have no assurance that in the future others will stop short along with him. It will thus become necessary for them to contend that what is said in the Confession about the infallible truth of Scripture does not involve the exact accuracy of the statements to which the conclusions of criticism are opposed. They will say, as some have already said, that these statements are infallibly true only in so far as the Spirit of God gives us an assurance of their truth. Thus they will be led to frame for us a new Bible—a Bible, the authority of which will depend, not on the objective infallibility of the written record, but on the persuasion of the individual soul that the truths of that record are brought home to the mind and heart by the assuring power of the Holy Spirit. The operation of that assuring power is indispensable to the faith and comfort of God's people. But to allow the substitution of it for the objective infallibility which we have been accustomed to attach to the whole of the written record would, I feel, be a fatal mistake.

I adhere to our judgment on Deuteronomy all the more because I regard it as both a needful and effectual barrier against such a mistake. I wish to impress our ministers and elders with a sense of the obligation that is laid upon them to sustain our judgment, in order to save the Church from incalculable disturbance and division. I am aware that the carrying out of it may cause a measure of disturbance and division,

but we ought boldly to choose the least of two evils. Consistent action for the integrity of the Bible is indispensable to our safety.

POSTSCRIPT.

For the sake of some readers I desire to point out that all my statements, now republished, refer exclusively to the character and merits of decisions already pronounced by the last General Assembly of our Church. I have most scrupulously refrained from touching any question which was left for the consideration of the Presbytery of Aberdeen. I have purposely avoided reading with any care or attention the reported speeches of its members since the month of June. I have glanced at the reports so far as to see whether references made to my own name were correct in point of fact. But I have not yet made myself acquainted with the arguments employed on either side. It may become my duty to do so before the meeting of our next Assembly.

H. W. M.

APPENDIX.

I.

REASONS OF DISSENT FROM THE JUDGMENT ON DEUTERONOMY BY DR. RAINY, AND OTHERS.

BECAUSE the judgment is incompetent as a judicial sentence, in respect that it proceeds on the sense ascribed to a declaration of Professor Smith in his defence on which he had no notice to plead either from the bar or the House, on which he did not plead, and on which it does not appear that he has been dealt with, for explanation or otherwise, in any Court; and in respect that the judgment was argued for from the same materials, and that Professor Smith was not heard thereon.

Because Professor Smith in the extracts charged under this particular of charge first, does not deny the inspiration and authority of the Holy Scriptures, and in particular of the Book of Deuteronomy, but maintains the same.

Because the theory that Deuteronomy presents in a peculiar literary form, but under the guidance of inspiration, the legislation of an age later than that of Moses, whatever objections may apply to it, and whatever dangers may be apprehended in connection with it, does not in itself conflict directly with any views of inspiration, even the most strict.

Because in order to establish consequences as arising from the said theory, tending to show that it is opposed to the Confession in its results, it is necessary to make assumptions which are not borne out by the Confession on the one hand,

or which are repudiated by Professor Smith on the other ; and both modes of procedure are illegitimate.

Because the statement of Professor Smith already referred to in the first reason, whatever the effect of it may be, could in any view communicate to his theory of Deuteronomy no new responsibility in reference to the Church's doctrine of the Bible, and ought to have been dealt with on its own merits.

Because it is of great moment to the successful maintenance and defence of the truth, that when opinions are published which are apprehended to have in them any elements of danger, the mode of dealing with them should be such as does not strain the discipline of the Church nor abridge the liberty of its office-bearers.

Because the present state of critical studies, especially with reference to the Pentateuch, renders it necessary that a large discretion should be allowed to the office-bearers of the Church in any honest efforts to do justice to indications of criticism, as long as faith in the peculiar origin, office, and authority of the Scriptures is maintained.

II.

ANSWERS TO THE ABOVE ADOPTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY.

THE great respect due to the names of those who have attached their signatures to these reasons seems to call for the following answers, which might otherwise have been unnecessary :—

As to the first of them, it is quite obvious and palpable to ordinary unbiassed understandings that the judgment does not proceed on any sense ascribed to a declaration by Professor Smith on the subject of inspiration, but simply on

what the Assembly regard as legitimate inferences from his views of the book of Deuteronomy, and that it deals with his declarations on inspiration only as furnishing no satisfactory reply to those inferences, while it leaves the question an undecided one—how his declarations may themselves be viewed in relation to the Confession of Faith. It is also manifest that no argument for the judgment was founded upon any other basis except what is furnished by the extracts in the libel, though it was indicated that his defence did not appear sufficient.

As to the second reason, the fact that in the extracts Professor Smith does not deny, but maintains, the inspiration of the Book of Deuteronomy cannot overthrow the force of legitimate inferences drawn by the Assembly from his view of that Book.

As to the third reason, the fact that Professor Smith's theory regarding Deuteronomy does not conflict with any view of inspiration, is quite consistent with the conclusion that the logical result of it is to make the inspiration of that Book indefensible.

As to the fourth reason, the judgment makes no assumption which is not borne out by the Confession. It simply represents that Professor Smith's theory is opposed to the doctrine of the infallible truth of the Book of Deuteronomy in the only character in which God presents it to us, just as any theory disputing the reality of incidents recorded by the Evangelist Luke would be opposed to the doctrine of the infallible truth of his writings. On the other hand, the judgment assumes nothing which Professor Smith has repudiated, but simply draws inferences from his acknowledged theory.

As to the fifth reason, it exhibits an inadequate perception of what the judgments and arguments for it were. These do not attach any new responsibility to Professor Smith's theory on account of his declarations. They only indicate that he has said nothing to remove the responsibility which inherently attaches to it.

As to the sixth reason, it is denied that the judgment involves any straining of discipline. The Assembly regard it

as demanded by the necessity of the case. Professor Smith demanded a libel; and the libel, with its defences, having been brought before the Assembly, no one can reasonably complain because the Assembly have drawn what they consider legitimate inferences from the extracts which it contains.

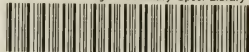
As to the seventh reason, the Assembly regard it as quite irrelevant. The judgment does not interfere with the large discretion referred to, but it finds that the theory of Professor Smith involves an unwarrantable use of that discretion.

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